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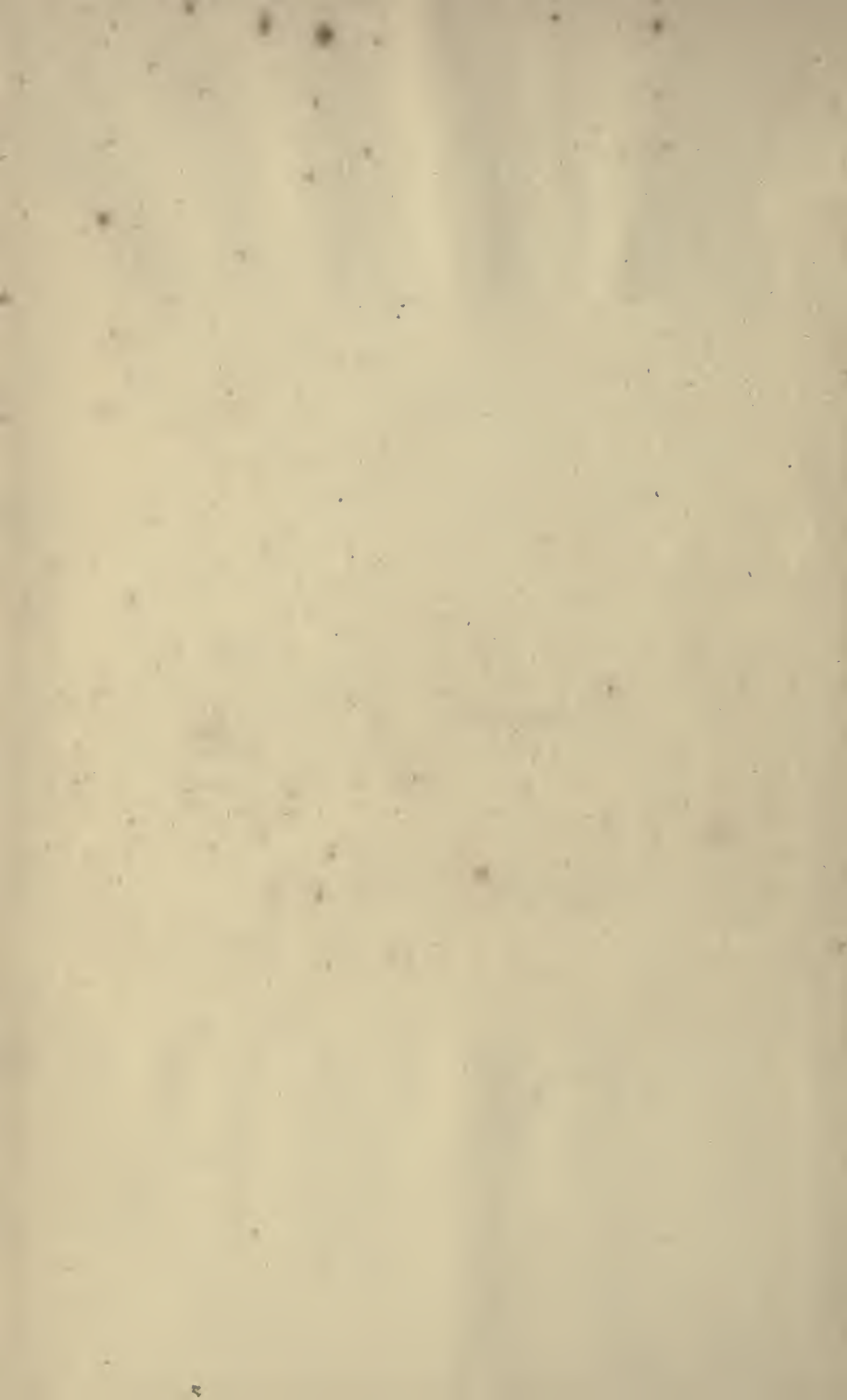
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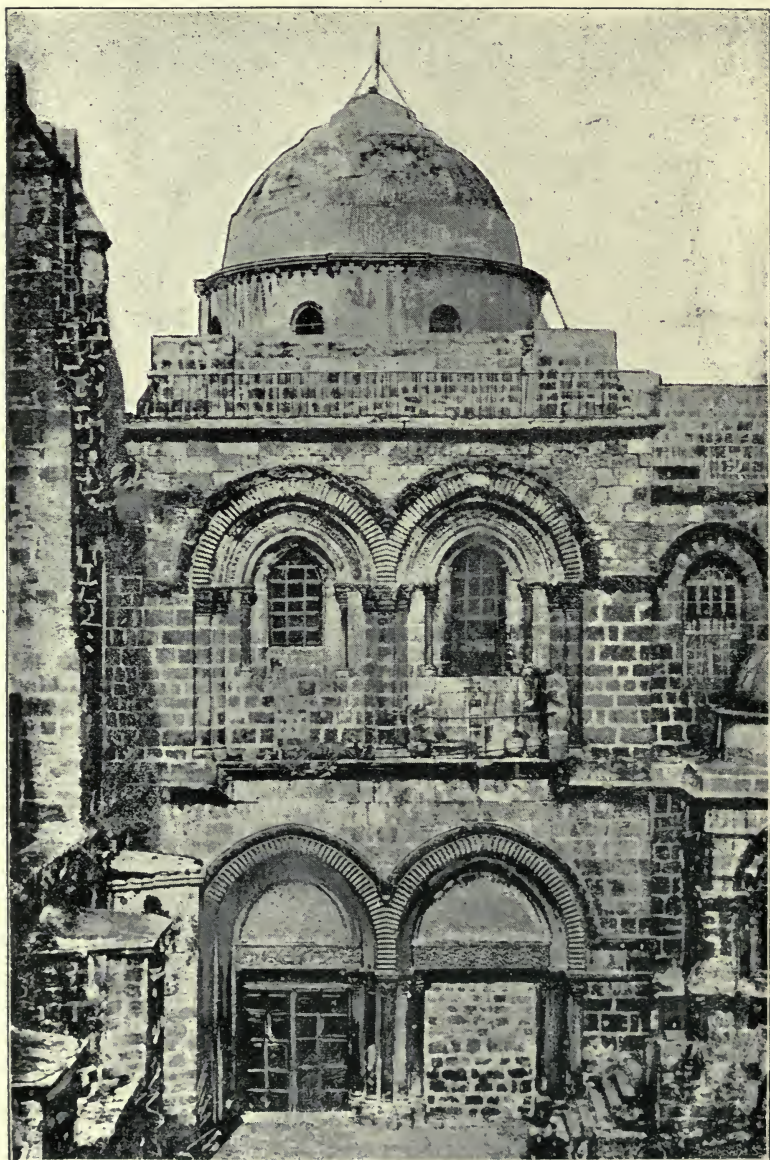


AMONG THE HOLY PLACES





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THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

AMONG THE HOLY PLACES

A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH PALESTINE

BY

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ILLUSTRATED

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Dedicated to
THE HONOURABLE
MRS. ALBANY ERSKINE
AS A MARK OF ESTEEM

PREFACE.

THE primary aim of these chapters is to place the reader, in a measure, in the position of the traveller—to let him see the country and the people with his own eyes.

At the same time, historical reminiscences are by no means excluded ; nor have the results of the latest explorations been ignored.

Little space is devoted to disputes on doubtful localities. The traditional Calvary, however, is defended ; and the scene of the Transfiguration is probably located at last.

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AMONG THE HOLY PLACES.

CHAPTER I.

LAND.

THE shore now comes in sight, to the south, a thread of yellow. Soon the northward-curving coast is added to the view. There you have both Egypt and Palestine—the Egyptian desert, and, adjoining it (the river of Egypt between), the land of the Philistines, and the region to the south of Gaza. And now that you have drawn nearer, and the outlines of the hillocks are more distinctly marked, you look south as they point out to you the ruins of Ascalon, birth-place of Herod the Great, he who slew the children. It stood on the coast, three hours to the north of Gaza. Some towers have partly survived, and in the distance the place looks not unlike a city set on a hill.

Still forward, and now Jaffa itself is in view : the houses can be distinguished. To your surprise it seems to rise almost perpendicularly from the sea. Built on the face of a great rock, the coast to the south of it getting suddenly lower, and that to the north receding so as to form a bay, Jaffa presents a most imposing appearance. And the houses seem literally packed together, and piled above each other. The only open spaces to be seen in the town are two very small patches of grass, about the middle.

And just by one of these rises a little lighthouse. This is the object your attention is directed to when you begin inquiring as to where the house of Simon the tanner stood : the house you refer to stood immediately by where the lighthouse now is.

The ship comes to anchor a good mile off, for Jaffa possesses no harbour : the traffic, which is very considerable, has all to be carried on by boats between the town and the ships.

The landing place is hardly worthy of the name of quay : it rather resembles a narrow paved foot-path, on to which you are pulled from the boat ; for the all but absence of tide in the Mediterranean does not necessitate lofty erections from which to load and unload boats.

Proceeding to the hotel, which you are informed is in the German-American colony, a little behind the town on the north-east side, you pass along a narrow way to the left, a continuation of the quay, in fact. This path skirts the foot of the cliffs on which the town is built, and your route lies round the north end of the promontory, along the outside of the town wall. It has rained, and the path is ankle-deep with well-beaten mud ; for the whole of the marine traffic passes this way. Rounding the overhanging cliff, you are speedily instructed as to the nature of that traffic. Scarcely have you gone twenty paces when, in order to let a heavily laden camel pass towards the quay, you must thrust yourself bolt upright against the town wall. Even then the great boxes that hang from either side of the poor beast, and sway in the careening like the pendulum of a clock meant for the eternal world, have no more than room to pass ; and if you escape a squeeze, it is because the swing of the load happens to favour you. Your stand is prolonged, for in truth the line of camels seems to be endless : they are still coming when you have given up as hopeless the intention of waiting till they should pass.



HEBRON.



APPROACHING JAFFA.

Happily the narrow way has an end: it opens into a large quadrangular market-place. Your route lies across this, and out by its north-east corner. Now you are in the country: houses are dotted along the right-hand side of the road, while on the left are luxuriant orange gardens, with the yellow fruit hanging in great abundance. This road, too, is wet and soft, but it is sandy, a pleasant variety from the black liquid layer on the quay path. A little way forward and you turn in through a gateway on the right, up an incline, and so into the colony. These colonists are here, having been moved to immigrate by a belief that the time had nearly arrived for the return of the Jews to their own land.

Eager to see the town, you shortly sally forth, bent on a quiet stroll of discovery. The market-place has a fascination for you: the glimpse you got of it in crossing has just been sufficient to whet your curiosity. Strolling down, then, through the gateway by which you came in—the colony is enclosed—you take a look at the road that passes here. It is not by any means a first-rate highway, being in fact what would be called a bye-road in the West, one that is but little used, and therefore little attended to: it is nevertheless the high road to Nabulus or Shechem, and therefore a most important thoroughfare.

Glancing furtively at the clusters of yellow oranges, as if half longing to be inside the tall palings, you plod on down to the market-place. It is fringed, as you at a glance can ascertain, with a border of huts and sheds and stalls of the most squalid description; and the people thronging the place are all of them more or less suggestive to you of the poorer sort of showmen and pedlars you have seen frequenting fairs at home.

At the south end of the market-place you turn to the right, and enter the town, and at the same time the bazaar, by the Jerusalem Gate. The bazaar is a street of shops or rather stalls, which runs along the lower part of the town,

towards the sea, a little way above the muddy path where you met the camels. It looks almost gay: what with tin-smiths' stalls, and provision stalls, and displays of saddlers' gear, and sweet-meats, and butchers' meat, and the other requisites of a community—for all the shops of the town are here—the street is lively and interesting. And the women seem never done carrying water from a well situated on a picturesque white-washed little square on the lower side of the street.

Here comes the first veiled woman you have seen—for the peasant women are not so particular in the matter of hiding their faces. Having got, in a small way, accustomed to the Egyptian veil—a long narrow strip of black crape, suspended just under the eyes, by a string drawn through a brass tube that rests on the forehead—you are not a little surprised and shocked on seeing the Syrian fashion. This woman is enveloped from head to foot in a pure white linen sheet. That, too, would be a rarity in Egypt, where black and blue are the colours almost universally worn. But, instead of the suspended veil, this individual has a black flowered one drawn tight over head and face; the face is completely covered with the veil, and the white sheet comes over the head and down by the cheeks and so to the feet. The veil is an old institution; for Isaiah says, "Remove thy veil; strip off the train."

This busy street leads into the heart of the town. Beyond the point where the shops cease, it is no longer a street: it degenerates into a narrow lane, off which innumerable other lanes, narrower still if possible, branch up and down the steep town.

Retracing your steps, and coming out again by the Jerusalem Gate—not a very pretentious erection—you turn to the right and climb a long steep street which runs by the back of the town. Here, on the left side, are many workshops of coppersmiths, all in a row; and the noise is

deafening. Curious little holes they are, where this work is carried on : down a step or two, in a space about six feet square, the workman is hammering away at a huge basin ; next door, or rather next hole, a boy is acquiring skill by blowing the bellows. And the work these shops produce is marvellous : there is nothing amateurish to be seen about the finished articles : they are faultless, works of art, and beautiful to behold. It would be in a hole like one of these that Alexander the coppersmith plied his trade—he who did Paul much harm.

And towards the top of the road, where it widens somewhat, is a khan, wherein scores of camels are to be seen lying resting, and men bustling about among the boxes and other packages.

At the upper end of this road you are in a position to take your bearings. Down on the left, or east, slopes a cemetery, beyond which is a marsh, and beyond that, again, rises the high ground, on the farther side of which lies the German-American colony. The side facing you is clad with orange gardens.

Advancing, you come round to the south side of the town, where the hill is steep below you ; and on a rising ground beyond the ravine is another cemetery.

You next essay the town proper—a difficult task. A very little investigation opens your eyes to the fact that here you have no streets, properly so called, whereby to guide your movements : the place is a network of narrow and crooked lanes, quite a maze to the stranger. Consequently you make up your mind to lose your way, and that at once. The lane, which at the outset is scarcely more than a step in width, gives no indications of widening as you go on : with a dogged consistency worthy of a better cause it keeps to its original dimensions. You meet a stray individual now and then, but the place is oppressively quiet : the people seem either to be resting indoors, or to be absent in the field or elsewhere. And but few

windows look into the lanes. There is no paving; and even these upper regions can boast of a share of the mud so prevalent below.

After threading your way through a great part of the upper town, and finding nothing but a repetition of backs of houses, you begin to bethink you of trying to work a passage down the face of the place. Entering upon a promising-looking path, you go gaily down a few paces, turn to the left, through an open doorway, and find yourself confronted with a stone stair. Somewhat disconcerted and discouraged, you return, and resolve before making any further experiments downwards, to try if you cannot find out the lighthouse and the adjoining little mosque said to occupy the site of Simon the tanner's house—by the way, there are to this day several tanneries about the place: they lie to the south of the town, and are but on a small scale, yet the presence of tanneries at all is a curious comment on the Scripture narrative. More by chance than otherwise you do hit upon the spot. It lies off a level lane that runs north and south, apparently skirting the edge, just about where the steepest part of the declivity in the town begins. This seems to be somewhat more of a thoroughfare than the rest.

The house is indeed an unassuming structure. The passage whereby you approach it leads to some other houses farther through. You take courage and penetrate to these. Your daring is amply rewarded: the people are glad to see you, invite you to enter, and after leading you to the housetop—the top of Simon's house—to enjoy the superb view out over the sea, accompany you to the interior. It is a Muslim place of worship, of the size of an ordinary room, one storey in height, and in the care of nobody in particular. In the passage without stands a blind beggar: few and small the coins he gathers, no doubt.

Tempted by the seeming thoroughfare-look of another

rapidly descending lane a little to the south of Simon's house, you advance boldly, in the confident hope of this time succeeding in getting down to the beach. Alas! your hopes are speedily blighted: twenty paces or so, and you stand in a small court, wherefrom outlet there is none: you have barely time to turn and flee, before some of the denizens, aroused by the cries of a child seated in a door, are out to see what the cause of the unwonted disturbance may be. This is enough: regaining the high level lane, wherein you now feel quite at home, you work southwards, avoiding anything that offers a descent; and after sundry turnings, you come forth to the open once more.

You now make for the beach, by the glen that divides this end of the town from the cemetery: a road descends the glen. The sands, though not of any very great extent, are smooth and clean; and a few of the inhabitants are taking advantage of this the only promenade about the place. You penetrate northwards under the town, and find that the sands soon come to an end, the sea and the more or less submerged flat rocks off the quay blocking the way. Under the town a strong wall girds the land, acting at once as a breakwater and a basis for the lowest line of dwellings. You now perceive why you failed to reach the beach by any of the descending lanes: the beach cannot be reached but by going out of the town, and working round by another way.

A curious incident comes under your notice as you stand here on the sands in front of the wall gazing up at the town. A man, close by you, is conversing with some one who looks out of a small window in a house right above the wall. Attracted by the conversation, you have fixed your eyes on the window aloft. Immediately a child is pushed out, and two hands hold it fast by the armpits. You naturally suppose this is being done by way of amusing the infant, and that shortly it will be drawn in again.

But no : to your horror the living thing drops, like a stone, towards the beach at the foot of the wall, where the man stands. Just when apparently about to touch the earth it is abruptly pulled up ; the man has it in his arms ; and the cord by which it has been so dexterously lowered is pulled in by the window again. You cannot help thinking of the words recorded in the Book of Joshua, how that Rahab at Jericho let the spies down by a cord through the window, her house being upon the town wall.

Jaffa was a prominent sea-port in the days of old : as stated in Second Chronicles, the king of Tyre promised to send timber from Lebanon for the building of Solomon's temple : it was to be conveyed in floats by sea to Joppa, and thence carried to Jerusalem. Here also the sacred narrative makes Jonah take ship, when he sought to flee from the presence of the Lord. Jonah's native village lay in the neighbourhood of Nazareth ; and therefore Haifa, had it been a port in those days, would have been nearer ; but Tyre and Sidon were the only shipping places to the north, and these were much farther off from Jonah's village than Joppa. "He went down to Joppa," says the Scripture, "and found a ship going to Tarshish : so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it"—precisely as one would do to-day.

And then, in New Testament times, Dorcas lived here, a woman full of good works. She died. They laid her in an upper chamber ; and sent to Lydda—not far off—for Peter. He called her by name, and she opened her eyes and sat up.

It is after this incident that Peter settles down here, in Simon the tanner's house, and stays many days. And hither come the messengers from Cæsarea—a twenty-seven miles' journey down a treeless coast—arriving just after Peter has seen the vision on the housetop.

The Greeks point out the site of Dorcas' house a little to the east of the town ; while the Latins locate it on the south, near the shore.

CHAPTER II.

TO JERUSALEM.

IN less than half an hour after leaving the Jerusalem Gate of Jaffa, you have passed through the rich belt of orchards that lie round the back of the town. These are the wealth of the place.

You picked up your conveyance in a suburb that creeps out the Jerusalem road a little way. The use of conveyances here is not of long standing: it is only since the road from the coast to the holy city was constructed that travelling by wheeled vehicles has been practicable in these parts. As for the road, you will be better able to judge of its merits as you proceed, although thus far it is a good highway, macadamized after the Western fashion, and equal to most of the ordinary Western roads.

Very pleasant is the drive through the garden district; though you must own to a measure of dislike to those coarse-looking cactus hedges that line the road. The shade of handsome trees is grateful. All around seems a paradise.

The carriage which conveys another and yourself is constructed to carry four, and a fifth if necessary beside the driver: so you have ample room. It is a long wooden car, built of the rough material, having four uprights which carry a canopy or cover like a four-poster bed. The passengers are meant to sit facing the horses, two by two. To enter the hinder compartment you climb over the side, there being no door. The front compartment is entered in like manner. Ladies would find it difficult. A water-

proof blind can be let down or rolled up, either to shut or open the space by which you climb in. Two horses are harnessed, one on either side of a pole; and a third renders assistance by pulling alongside. The driver is a pleasant-faced old man, in rags.

Outside the garden region, you are at once in the Plain of Sharon. This is one of the three great plains of Palestine: commencing at Mount Carmel it stretches south, practically the whole length of the country, though they give a different name—Philistia—to the part of it south of Jaffa. On the east it is bounded by the hill country of Judea, and on the west by the sea. Narrow at first, it widens as it sweeps south, till at this point it is some ten miles across. Your journey this afternoon, therefore—for you are to pass the night at Ramleh on the farther edge—is simply across the Plain of Sharon.

At first you seem to be going to traverse a boundless flat, with neither tree nor house nor fence to break the monotony. The land looks fairly fertile, though sandy, and is under cultivation in parts. But to a great extent it is left to the occupation of weeds and wild flowers: the red anemone especially is plentiful: the ground is tinted with it as far as the eye can see: you say to yourself, "Surely this flower must have been the rose of Sharon."

By and by you pass a village; then, a couple of miles farther on, another. The plain here is not so very level: some heights and hollows serve to diversify the scene. The little square watch-towers dotted along the road at intervals of a mile or two, and intended originally for the protection of travellers and goods, though now shut up, help to keep you on the alert: no sooner has one been passed than you begin to look out for the next.

The mountains before you in the background are becoming more distinct; while immediately in front lie extensive plantations—olives, it appears. Through these, the road grows bare again, and you are glad to salute

another watch-tower. And now the lofty tower of Ramleh looms in the distance. The rest of the way thither is in prospect of plantations; while another village on a hill to the south seems to join in assuring you that you are by no means travelling into a desert.

Ramleh is pleasantly situated on the edge of the plantations that, beginning here, extend eastwards, apparently indefinitely, and sweep the mountains northwards by the foot of the not very distant hills. But Ramleh itself is a wretched village. The hotel, though small, is modern and excellent, kept by a German Jew, one of the aforementioned immigrants who came as the forerunners of Israel, and as farmers meanwhile of the Plain of Sharon.

There is no particular necessity for breaking the journey here: the only thing is, by breaking it you cut off ten miles, thus reducing the next day's stretch to thirty: forty at a sitting would be tiresome.

Ramleh, though it has been held by some to be identical with Arimathea, and was undoubtedly in later times a town of some consequence, has little to offer the visitor. Sallying forth to inspect the place, you are startled to find yourself close upon a row of lepers. These, some ten or a dozen in number, and of both sexes, have doubtless learned of the arrival of a conveyance, and have seated themselves by the roadside not far off from the hotel. They are the first lepers you have seen; and it takes a moment or two before you can realize what it is that ails them. Their countenances are horribly disfigured, and they hold out knobs of fingerless hands, a pitiable spectacle. Their breath is almost in your face before you give the matter a thought.

The bazaar is the poorest possible: you seem to be parading an alley lined with cow-houses, when, at the next turn, though all continues as squalid, the open holes appear, displaying their several articles of stock; and a few of the villagers are congregated for gossip. You pass

through, as hastily as you decently can; and make westward for the tower. On your way thither you pass between great cactus hedges, and across a cemetery more extensive than the village. On the farther side rises the tower. Extensive ruins stand around. Ascending the tower—not without difficulty, for the stair is much worn and broken—you are charmed with the view. Especially do you note Lydda—whence Peter was summoned to Joppa: it nestles white among the woods a couple of miles to the north, near the foot of the hills. From the extent of the orchards about Ramleh you would have expected a better village.

The jingling of bells in the distance announces the approach of a caravan. This turns out to be a party of four men whom you met on the steamer. They carry tents, and are to pitch beyond the village. You wander, later, as far as the camp: it stands on a piece of lovely turf by the side of a large walled pond of brown water, from which the villagers keep carrying supplies—not possibly for drinking, surely not for washing. But, then, these people's notions of water are very different from yours.

The sun goes down as you retrace your steps. Passing near by the somewhat vast mosque, which is situated at the east end of the village, you hear the voice of the muezzin reverberating from the balcony of the lofty minaret, calling the faithful to prayer. In the stillness of the evening the man's voice is heard afar; and he trills out his monotone notes not so unsweetly.

Awakened early in the morning by the jingling of mules' bells, you look out to see what sort of cavalcade is about to pass, for your window overlooks the road. They appear to be the advance contingent of a tenting party, as the beasts are laden with articles of the sort carried for a tourist caravan. The riders will no doubt follow, expecting to find the tents pitched, and dinner well-nigh cooked, by the time they ride into camp.

Your old man has the three horses harnessed, and everything ready for the start, by seven o'clock, the appointed hour. Poor fellow, he does not look as if he had rested well: his bed would be in the stable, and made up of very little straw: such a commodity is too precious in these parts to be given to drivers to sleep on, drivers, by the way, who cannot afford to pay anything. You wonder whether he has had breakfast—certainly he has not had what you would call breakfast: a crust of bread, and perhaps the luxury of a fig, will be all he has tasted. But you have provided for the mid-day meal, at any rate: lunch sufficient for three or four has been put in, and you think it as well to let him have his share shortly after starting: he can then take it when he pleases.

A little way on the road, you have passed beyond the plantations which imparted such a delicious feeling of freshness both before being reached and also while being traversed. And now the fields again stretch on either side, and occasional villages appear, mostly set on hills. And the hills and dales proclaim the fact that though not yet in the hill country of Judea proper, you have left the Plain of Sharon behind. On a hill, about four miles to the right, lie the ruins of Gezer. The name of this town is probably not familiar to the ordinary student of Scripture. It has played its part, however, and had its troubles; and now it rests in peace. In First Kings it is stated that Pharaoh had gone up and taken Gezer, and burnt it, slaying the Canaanites who inhabited it; and had given it for a portion to his daughter, Solomon's wife. Solomon rebuilt it.

Farther, over heights and hollows, the country growing distinctly more stony and rough, and cultivation being restricted to mere patches, you pass along on the south side of a bare hill, a village lying a little way up from the road. Here a curious sight meets your view. The road is being repaired, and its course slightly altered so as to

avoid an abrupt declivity. Unhappily the old portion is still the route, and you have the benefit of it. Never was there such pitching and tossing, jerking and jolting: hold on as you may, you are unseated, and for a moment it is a question whether the home-made cart will be able to hold together, or escape being overturned. Once over the hazard, you have time to inspect the work of road-making as carried on in these parts.

It appears that instead of levying a rate, the more practical method of requisitioning hands is resorted to. This village, consequently, is required to supply so much labour; and it does it mainly through the females: a whole string of girls, bearing on their heads straw baskets of the size and shape of wash-hand basins, fetch the necessary broken stones. These carriers seem to do the work with a will: they laugh and talk and are apparently quite happy. Clad in blue bathing-gowns tightened round the waist with a string, bare legged and bare armed, they are a small regiment in uniform. And the way they walk in line, one following close upon another, recalls the pictures of labourers one sees on the tombs in Egypt. As for the few men employed on the job, they have to do all their part of the work with only one implement, a one-legged pick, broad at the point. With this they lift earth or stones, making it serve as shovel as well as pick. It is the solitary tool they possess. And yet the road presents the appearance of having had wheelbarrows and all the other appliances of the West at work on it.

Some farther slow climbing, and too swift descending, brings you to the halting place. Here, at the entrance to the real hill country, the horses are rested an hour, by way of preparation for the heavy pull. A sort of inn by the roadside, on the right, offers refreshment for man and beast. It is a very poor-looking place, but probably clean and serviceable. Not wishing anything, however, you prefer to pass the hour outside. To this intent you pro-

ceed in advance of the conveyance, instructing the driver to start at his own time, and trust to picking you up on the road. The truth is, you are fascinated with the picturesqueness of the scene immediately in front, and impatient to get closer to it; for the road seems to come to an end.

Glad to get stretching your limbs, you set out right joyfully. It is but a little way, and you reach the foot of a thickly wooded glen, which goes by the name of Wady Ali or Glen Ali; and this particular point is called the Gate of the glen. The mountains on either side come quite close to the road, and almost overhang it. All sorts of vegetation crowd the slopes, and fringe the rocks. The air is moist with fragrance; and you feel invited to pause and rest in the cool and refreshing shade.

You sit awhile on the ledge of rock, looking down upon the road, the wide-spreading branches just over your head like an umbrella. At length, startled by the sound of voices—for the stillness around has been, like the darkness of Egypt, such as might be felt—you get down into the road, and look about. Far up, right on the summit, and almost as perpendicularly above you as though on the top of a steeple, you at the base, you are surprised to see signs of life: some children are peering down over the edge of what is evidently a table-land, on the south side of the pass: instinct has told them there are human beings on the road below. It is but little you can see, being too immediately under the spot; but you manage to catch a glimpse of a playful kid, that almost jumps over, in the exuberance of its youthful spirits: it is evidently a playmate of the children. And you can discern just the least bit of a projecting roof—branches or thatch of some sort. As to the extent of the table-land you can form no idea; but be it small or great—and it cannot be very great—it is a charming spot: never was such another bit of Arcady. Entranced, you are still here when the coachman comes in sight driving up the pass.

As it turns out, the horses wanted a good rest before attacking these glens : it is a case of climbing, apparently endless : you wonder whether you are not being conveyed to the roof of the world. Out of one glen ; over a flat, and into another ; a third, opening right or left and disclosing what seem to be unapproachable regions ; and still the sensation of climbing : such is the route in these parts. But withal it is pleasant : the trees, and the dense growth of underwood everywhere, help to keep up a sense of freshness, almost equivalent to drinking cold water—of which you have none. And that village below is not only shaded but buried : you can scarcely see it for the bushes and trees that gather round and form a canopy over it.

The scene changes when you have surmounted these steeps, and gone over the summit : down on the farther side, you enter a short smooth-floored glen. At the near end, and on the right or south slope, lies Kirjath-Jearim, the sweetest of villages. Its northern exposure would seem to be against it, and you almost wonder they had not thought of building it on the opposite slope ; but the opposite slope serves to protect it from the north winds ; and the village itself is not so steep but that the sun can get easily at most nooks and corners of the gardens. What especially strikes you about this place is the general situation : the village would probably be remarkable on a hill-side anywhere ; but here it gives the impression of occupying a well-timbered park : with its imposing old church in the foreground, it is as though it were some feudal stronghold, surrounded by proud domains. The road skirts the north slope, a handsome well-shaded avenue. Before climbing the eastern end of this noble dale, and passing out of it to other scenes, you pause. It is not the majestic ruins of the church that interest you : these, though they have weathered a thousand winters and more, are in a sense modern : it is the

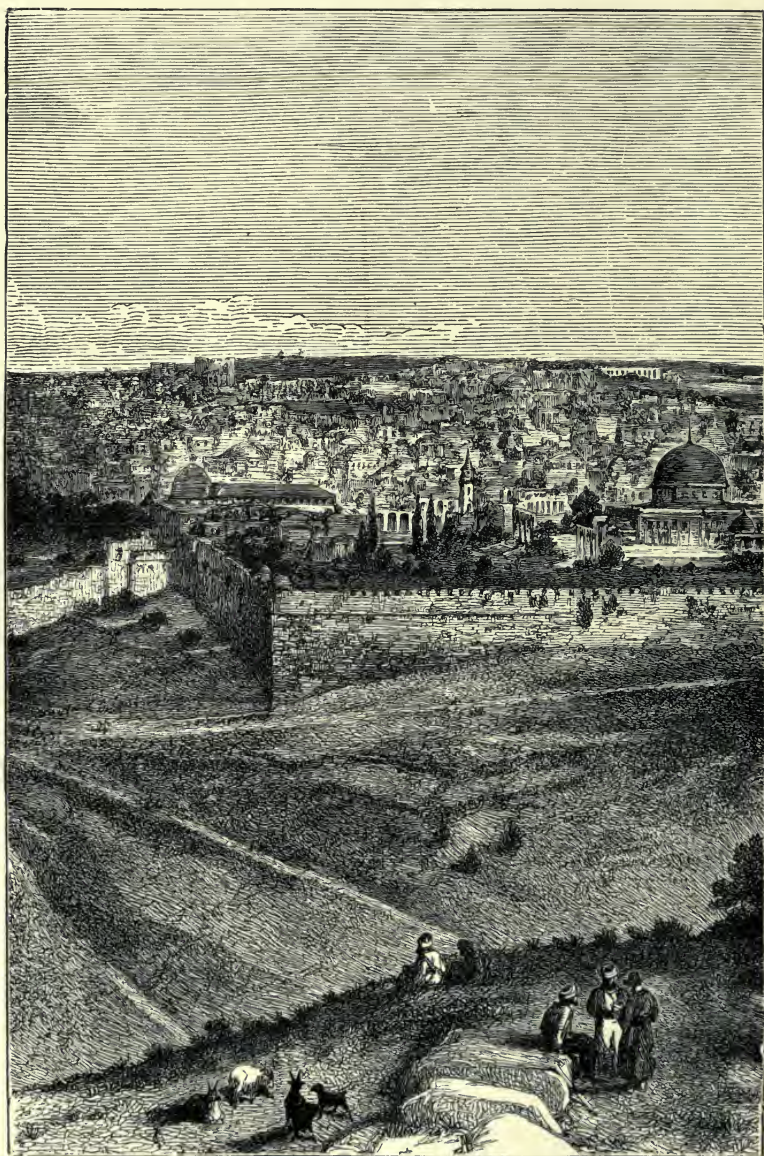
days of Samuel you would go back to, and the stirring times when the ark of God was carried to and fro. Eli was dead, and the Philistines had taken the sacred thing. These, through affliction, had sent it away; and the cattle that drew the cart on which it was laid had brought it to Beth-shemesh—some ten miles south-west from here, near Timnath. The people there, flocking from the harvest-field, had looked into it, and had been smitten. Thereupon it was brought to this place; and here it remained twenty years, in the house of Abinadab in the hill.

Another hour's alternate climbing and descending brings you to the summit of a range, below which lies a deep valley. The road down makes gentle zig-zags; but the natives prefer to take the short cut, right over the rocks. It is amazing how those women, bearing on their heads huge bundles of roots for burning, can make the descent over the rocks. Barefooted, they evidently feel it painful, for at times, on setting down the foot, the whole body seems to sink to the earth. But they take the short way as a matter of course: one after another they appear on the crest, and make straight for the village below.

The stream that flows through this glen—after rain, for it is practically dry to-day—is crossed by a bridge. At the near end of the bridge are two places of refreshment; and here a halt of half an hour is made. This gives you time to have a look at the traditional scene of David's encounter with Goliath. A green meadow, a little way below the bridge, is pointed out as the spot where the giant was slain. And certainly David would have no difficulty in finding plenty of smooth stones in the bed of the brook. The physical features of the place correspond exactly with the Bible narrative, which says that the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other; and there was a valley between them. David would naturally pass over

the brook on his way westward to the meadow to meet the Philistine.

From this point the road is so steep that you walk a mile or two to spare the horses. It is an excellent piece of road, constructed with considerable engineering skill and daring, but the mountain side is such that there is nothing for it but a long pull and a strong pull. Winding northwards, and then eastwards, you leave on your left hand great stony glens, across which, some three miles off, towers the prominent peak of Neby Samwil, with Mizpah as a cap; and, a mile farther north, Gibeon; and, westward, the valley of Aijalon and the two Beth-horons—scenes of Joshua's exploits. Nearing the end of this tough pull, you look down, northwards, to a village which literally clings to the side of the glen. And now at length you have made the summit. Here you overtake some camels, heavily laden, striding towards the holy city. The journey is over: down gently a little way—for "the mountains are round about Jerusalem"—and you drive through a modern suburb of good villas intermixed with some humble cottages; and on your left, on a rising ground, leave the extensive Russian buildings, provided for the pilgrims of the Eastern Church, who come here in hordes. Beyond this barracks the road bends to the right—south-east—and descends through quite a busy scene. The houses, on the left, hide the exterior of the city wall, their backs being right against it. At the foot of this busy road is the Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem.



JERUSALEM.

CHAPTER III.

JERUSALEM.

IN attempting to describe Jerusalem, probably the Jaffa Gate is the best starting-point. This is the only gate on the west side; and it is situated about midway down the city. The city walls are some twenty feet high, of brownish grey stone, battlemented, and variegated with square turrets at intervals. You can walk round the walls on the top: there is a narrow path, barely broad enough to let two persons pass, on the inner side. The battlements rise on the outer side about breast-high above this. The gates are all of them square porches roofed; and the road does not run right through them; but you go forward, and, once inside, turn to the right or left, as the case may be. These gates are, on the west, the Jaffa; the north, the Damascus and the Herod; the east, the Stephen; the south, the Arab and the Zion—six in all.

Immediately adjoining the Jaffa Gate, on its south side, rises an imposing square building called the Tower of David, the ancient Hippicus. At least, the foundations and a part of the walls are original. A moat surrounds this tower and its adjoining buildings; and the whole forms the citadel. The moat recalls Jeremiah's words, "Jerusalem shall be built again with street and moat." A barracks is attached, on the south side; and here the Turkish troops are quartered, in considerable numbers. The soldiers wear a blue uniform, and look somewhat like English militia. It is curious to find a Western uniform

adopted here ; for the petticoat of the people is quite unknown in the army, trousers taking its place.

To one walking on the wall, next to the citadel and barracks—still going south—come the gardens of the Armenian monastery and Patriarchate. The buildings themselves occupy a large space just to the east of the gardens, a street running between. These gardens extend to the south-west corner of the walls.

Turning the corner and proceeding eastward, the Zion Gate is soon reached. This crossed, the wall declines rapidly, the buildings inside being some Jewish educational institutions, and, a little farther cityward, two handsome domed synagogues. At the foot of the slope is the Arab Gate, inside which is a large piece of vacant ground, a wilderness of cactus bushes. Still forward a little, and the corner is reached.

Turning northwards, the wall runs right up, shortly, to the Temple ground—the vacant place still within. The Temple ground is the finest portion of the city, by far. It is the public park, so to speak. Beautifully levelled up of old, and paved, and laid out in grass, altogether apart from the associations attaching to it, or from the two grand mosques that adorn it, it is a delight to behold. Its shape is rectangular, the length running north and south. It is enclosed on the south and east by the city wall. Following the south wall of the Temple ground, then, you proceed eastward to the corner. Turning north, you have the Valley of Jehoshaphat, deep, on the outside. You would fain linger on this portion of the wall because of the delightful grounds within.

Northward, the Temple ground ends just before the Stephen Gate is reached. Here, within, you look down upon the Pool of Bethesda, now empty of water, and being filled with rubbish. It lies by the outer edge of the buildings that enclose the Temple ground on the north, and probably marks a natural ravine.

Passing on, over the Stephen Gate, you skirt some bits of garden, while the Muslim quarter of the city lies closely packed beyond. And now, after a climb, the north-east corner is reached, and you turn westward. Here the wall is on high ground, the rock outside being cut away sheer and deep. It is still the Muslim quarter inside the wall, but not so densely built just here : some gardens occupy the high ground. Here, next, is the Herod Gate, little used. To get out by it you would descend a steep foot-path from the gardens, and with difficulty make your way through the stony little porch. This gate corresponds, in point of size and neglect, to the Arab Gate on the south side ; only, the traffic through the latter is very considerable.

Proceeding, still westward, and still on high ground, you reach after a rapid descent the Damascus Gate, the handsomest of them all. Passing over this gate, still westward, you traverse the edge of the Christian quarter, and are not a little shocked to see, at your feet within, a monster pig-sty. You shudder at the thought of falling down into such a menagerie ; for the pigs are large and hungry-looking. Still forward, now inclining just the least bit north-westward, and ascending, and the corner of the wall is reached. From this point southward, or slightly south-eastward, it is no distance to the Jaffa Gate whence you started. Inside the wall, down this part, are the Latin buildings—residence of the Latin Patriarch, and other ecclesiastical buildings.

Four of the gates mark valleys, down which the main thoroughfares run. Entering by the Jaffa Gate, you are at once in the valley that runs down, eastward, on the north edge of Zion, and out, southward, by the Arab Gate on the farther side of the mountain. Through the Damascus Gate comes the great thoroughfare from the north, lying in the glen that cuts the city in two ; through the Stephen Gate, that which lies in the valley dividing

Moriah or the Temple hill on the south from Bezetha on the north.

Jerusalem stands on four mountains: two on the west, namely, Zion—much the largest—and, to the north of it, Acra, not so distinctly marked; two on the east, namely, Moriah and Bezetha. The valley between the latter two is not very manifest.

The city comes but a little way forward on Zion, the great bulk of the mountain, southward, lying outside the walls. The flat portion immediately without the walls is used as a cemetery. The slopes, down to the Valley of Hinnom, are gardens of various kinds—market-gardens.

Jerusalem is skirted on the west by the Valley of Gihon. This wide ravine, coming with a sweep from the west, gets gradually deeper as it passes Zion, until, far down, it turns east, and, skirting the south base of the mountain, takes the name of the Valley of Hinnom, or of the son of Hinnom. A much grander valley runs right south on the east side of the city, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, through which flows the Kidron—when it is not dry. Hinnom runs into Jehoshaphat at the south-east corner of Zion. On the north side, the city has no valley: if it had, the place would have been impregnable, to the ancient methods of warfare.

The upper portion of Gihon valley, before it takes the bend that brings it alongside Zion, is a great burial-ground. In the midst of it is the Upper Pool of Gihon, a dangerous-looking place, unfenced, and deep, with perpendicular sides. From this foul reservoir a conduit leads to the Pool of Hezekiah in the city, at the north back of the street that runs inward from the Jaffa Gate. As for the Lower Pool of Gihon, down near the turn into the Valley of Hinnom, it is dry. Across the mound that makes this dry dam runs the Bethlehem road, which, mounting the hill-side beyond, proceeds southward.

The Pool of Siloam is at the foot of Zion, on the east side, and marks the lower end of the valley that came down between Zion and Ophel, which latter ridge is but a spur or continuation of the Temple hill. Right across the Valley of Jehoshaphat from the Pool of Siloam lies the village of Siloam. It clings to the face of the opposite hill, called the Mount of Offence—in reality a continuation southward of the Mount of Olives.

The long hill opposite Zion, on the south side of the Valley of Hinnom, is the Hill of Evil Counsel, so called because here, at the High Priest's country house, Judas covenanted to betray our Lord.

Calvary lies at the north-east corner of the Pool of Hezekiah, now within the walls. The mount, or hillock, is no longer discernible, a church having been built over the spot. This is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

To reach it from the Jaffa Gate, you would descend the thoroughfare that runs by the back of Mount Zion towards the heart of the city; when down a hundred paces or so, take a street to the left; another hundred yards, and you have reached the spot. As you came along the latter street you might have seen the Pool of Hezekiah through some of the shops on the left: the back walls of the houses dip into it. By the way, speaking of streets is apt to be misleading: these are but lanes, the best of them, a couple of paces wide.

There is but one door to the Church of the Sepulchre: it faces the south, and opens into a square paved court of no great extent. The building is adorned with a dome, and possesses a bell which gives forth a remarkably deep gong-like sound. This bell, along with a couple of shrill ones, they ring for hours every day: you have got the tones and variations fixed indelibly on your ear: but even now that you are familiarized with it, the overpowering force of the gong is rather distracting.

Inside the door of this church you pass a raised seat or platform, whereon are squatted two Turkish soldiers, their guns, with fixed bayonets, leaning against the wall. These men are not sent here to keep the door: their function is to maintain order between the rival Christian sects that have portions of the interior allotted to them. You pass in, without asking any man's leave; and the soldiers take no notice of you, being too busy with their cigarettes and coffee, which latter article they prepare on the spot.

The dome is built right over the sepulchre. The chapel that runs eastward from the dome circle or rotunda belongs to the Greek or Eastern Church. A passage encircles this chapel. Beyond the north limb of this passage is situated the chapel of the Latin or Western Church. The Armenians are located on the south side of the rotunda, alongside the door.

Straight forward from the door is a red marble slab, meant to mark the spot where our Lord's body was anointed for the burial. It is called the stone of anointment, and has a row of lamps suspended above it, so many belonging to each of the sects represented. The pilgrims, on entering, make direct for this stone, and prostrating themselves, kiss it fervently.

Passing to the left from this stone, you enter the rotunda. The whole place is paved. In the centre stands the sepulchre. It is a marble, pavilion sort of structure, with a good deal of ornamentation about it. The idea is, that the rock in which the tomb was hewn has nearly all been cut away, leaving a skeleton tomb, as it were, which has been coated with marble outside and in. Many doubt whether any of the original rock survives at all. Certainly, if you stoop and enter the sepulchre—which you are at perfect liberty to do, if there is room, for it can hardly contain three persons at a time—you will be surprised at the height of the

ceiling: lamps are suspended here, as above the stone of anointment; and they hang from a height of not less than ten feet. From this, you would infer that at least the rock roof of the sepulchre has disappeared.

To enter the sepulchre, you pass through a small dark porch. Indeed, the whole place, though on the ground level—that is, not at all a crypt—would be dark enough, and the sepulchre itself quite dark, were it not for the lamps within. It is from this little porch that the fire issues at Easter, on which occasion unseemly scuffles have been known to take place, each pilgrim struggling to be the first to light his candle at the sacred flame.

Returning to the stone of anointment, you ascend a steep stone stair, on the east side of the entrance passage. This leads to Calvary, which also is enclosed within the church. Calvary, like the sepulchre, is common property: that is, all the sects can approach it. Altars are constructed over the place; and three large crucifixes are set in the rock—where our Lord's cross stood, and those of the two thieves. You may lift a narrow piece of grating, and push your hand into the rent of the rock. Here, also, it seems open to question whether the rock is genuine. It is real rock, no doubt, and looks not unlike what you would have expected the summit of Calvary to be; but, descend the stair, and pry into the places immediately below the rock, and you are somewhat staggered. Here are rooms of various sorts. You pass through all of them, and search about in the dark holes off the inner passage, and you are forced to the conclusion that if the rock upstairs is in its natural position, there must have been most industrious honey-combing underneath it. And yet you cannot conceive how any body of men, let alone devout men, could have conspired to suspend the rock there, on masonry, and give it out to be the genuine, natural Mount Calvary.

Behind the Greek chapel, eastward, a long, wide, semi-dark stair conducts to an underground chamber, which they designate the Chapel of the Finding of the Cross. Here, they say, the original cross was discovered, having been dug for at the instigation of Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, some three hundred years after the time of Christ. You probably meet a procession of ecclesiastics, bearing tapers, and chanting from books, either on their way down to this chapel or coming up, accompanied by a few pilgrims. Outside, on the roof of this part of the church—but you must go round a considerable way to get to it—live a colony of Abyssinian Christians. Their quarter consists of a group of den-like-hovels; and the wonder is how the poor, timid, mild-eyed immigrants can subsist.

As for the Copts—that is, Egyptian Christians—they are but few here; and their tiny chapel, attached to the back of the sepulchre, and resembling a garden bower, is seldom opened.

Acquainted with one of the Greek clergy, you are privileged to have a look through the monastery adjoining the Church of the Sepulchre. The entrance to this rather extensive institution is off a street that skirts the north side of the Pool of Hezekiah—separated from the latter, however, by this monastery and other houses—and passing behind, or on the north side of, the church, descends into the lower parts of the city. You are conducted through many curious passages to the cell of your friend. It is a pleasant, bright little room, bedroom and study in one. The institution possesses a spacious refectory, with a pulpit from which one of the brethren discourses or reads during meals. The cooks are at work in the kitchen: they tend a boiling cauldron of onions. The butler fills you a glass of home-made wine; and everybody is most agreeable.

The library is extremely interesting: you hold in your

hand the famous manuscript of the Teaching of the Apostles, discovered recently in a library at Constantinople, where it had lain for centuries. The reason why it escaped notice is because it is bound up with another work, and comes second in the volume.

Then to the chapel of the monastery. Here service is going on. The room is double, with low ceiling, and armed seats fixed all round on the walls. Each man has his own seat. The floor is unoccupied—the worshippers, that is, being all accommodated round the walls. The psalms are being chanted by a bishop, a decent-looking old man with a bushy beard; and the audience are nearly all of them hanging by the armpits, each on an upper pair of arms attached to his chair. You would have gone back, unwilling to disturb the service, but your friend drags you through.

From the fresh and open cemented court outside—you are on the second floor—you walk right on to the top of the chapels clustered about the west end of the Church of the Sepulchre. In passing over, you look down through some grated holes, and, behold, there go the people: it is the street you approached the church by—Christian Street. The whole of the roof of the church belongs to the Greeks. They also own the dome. Mounting to it by an outside stair, your friend unlocks a door, and you enter. From the encircling passage you look down upon the sepulchre and the people walking in the rotunda. A narrow ledge projects, outside the partition through which you look down. This seems hardly wide enough to stand upon; and moreover the partition curves outward as it rises; but your friend tells you of a brother who used to go around on that ledge, sweeping it, every day, at the imminent risk of falling into the abyss and being dashed to pieces on the flags.

The Patriarch's residence is on the opposite side of the street from the monastery. A bridge, after the manner of

the Bridge of Sighs, connects the two. This bridge is almost right over the door by which you entered the monastery. The residence is luxurious, to a degree. In the rear is a beautiful garden. You pluck an orange. Not that oranges grow well at Jerusalem: it stands too high: but you take the fruit, being invited to do so.

On your way to the hotel you encounter a funeral. It is evidently that of some important personage, for the crowd is large, including many clergy; and lighted lamps head the procession. The people chant a service. The coffin is borne shoulder-high. What a scramble to get through the Zion Gate! They enter the Latin portion of the immense open cemetery outside the wall, on Zion. During the service, you contrive to stand behind the officiating clergyman; and looking over his shoulder, you behold a strange spectacle: the coffin lid has been removed, and there lies a youthful monk, in his every-day robes, reclining slightly on one side, pale, but to all appearance asleep. These encircling cemeteries recall Ezekiel's words, "Her graves are round about her."

CHAPTER IV.

JERUSALEM (continued).

AT first sight the hundred and one tortuous little lanes of Jerusalem seem hopelessly confused and confusing: none of them quite comes up to the Western idea of a street, and ever so many seeming thoroughfares turn out to be blind alleys. Jerusalem, however, is not laid out altogether without method; and a very little study of the place helps to disentangle the skein. Generally speaking, the main streets lie along the valleys which divide the several hills of the city from each other, the gates being placed at the entrances of the valleys.

For instance, if one enters the city from the west, it must be by the Jaffa Gate. Here begins the valley which divides Zion on the south from Acra on the north; and the street descends the valley right to the edge of Mount Moriah, which lies on the east side of the city. This street, then, may, for the sake of convenience, be called Jaffa Street. It is commonly called David Street by Westerns, because the Tower of David stands at the top of it; but it is more convenient to name the streets after the gates, respectively.

Similarly, entering the city from the north by the Damascus Gate—the Herod Gate is of no importance—one stands in the beginning of the valley which runs, nearly south, through the entire length of the city, dividing the two western hills, Acra and Zion, from the two eastern, Bezetha and Moriah. This street, the one

most nearly of them all approaching to the Western idea of a street, may be called, not Damascus Street, but Temple Street, because off it run the numerous entrances into the Temple ground. Jaffa Street and it meet at the south-west corner of Moriah.

Just inside the Damascus Gate, another thoroughfare parts from this one, and runs southward, too, but a little west—till it strikes Jaffa Street about the middle. Let this be called Damascus Street.

From the crossing where this strikes Jaffa Street, a street runs southward up the north face of Zion to Zion Gate in the south wall. Call this Zion Street.

The fifth thoroughfare is entered through the Stephen Gate in the east wall, and lies along the hardly perceptible valley between Moriah on the south and Bezetha on the north. It strikes Temple Street at a point about a third of the latter's length below the Damascus Gate. These five comprise all the great thoroughfares; and steering by them one need never be at a loss.

To "walk about Zion," one would enter by the Jaffa Gate. Immediately inside, on the right, stands the moated Tower of David. Beyond, and in front of this, you reach an open space on your right. It is alluded to in Second Chronicles as "the broad place at the gate of the city." Passing on, leaving the squatted peasants on either side, one descends the narrow way—for its breadth does not exceed two paces. It is stepped—only, with very long shallow steps. Here are numerous shops, and, farther down, corn stores. The crowd is dense. Along either side, where the shops do not prevent it, sit a row of peasant women, clad in blue cotton bathing-gowns, bare breasted, barefooted, and with a kerchief over the head. These women wear no veil, and their faces are tanned and prematurely wrinkled. They sit here selling vegetables and fowls, the latter tied in pairs by the feet, and lying helpless on the ground.

The houses on either side are mostly of one storey, some two. You have wandered over the roofs of them, looking down into the throbbing artery. It was a curious sight : bending forward cautiously lest you should fall over the edge, you watched the silent traffic below. It was at times like watching the movements of magnified creeping things, again like looking upon the sea-weed-laden tide confined between perpendicular walls of rock.

These houses are all of them built of stone. Little if any wood is used in their construction, for the very sufficient reason that wood for such purposes is not to be had. The stone arch takes the place of beams and rafters. Consequently each room is practically a separate building. Above, the arched room is covered externally with a coating of cement. This is the roof, in the case of a single-storey house ; but otherwise, the floor of the next storey. This arrangement gives great solidity to a dwelling. It also ensures considerable quiet. The larger houses enclose a court. In this the stair—stone also—is placed ; and the roof is surrounded with a parapet, usually of short tile pipes—probably for lightness. These tiles are laid so that they can be looked through ; and a favourite arrangement of them is to have their ends form a triangle. The whole parapet is whitewashed.

A curious feature in these streets is the half arch. This would seem to serve the purpose of a buttress, to prevent the opposite walls from falling together. But the odd thing is that it is not simply an arch : it is an arch cut in two perpendicularly : its lower end springs from the one wall, and in the opposite wall—much higher up—it finds its key-stone.

As you proceed down Jaffa Street, avoiding toes of squatting women and heads of leg-tied fowls, and standing to let a string of camels pass, you seem to find no opening into the dense mass of building on the right—Mount Zion. You are descending perceptibly : were the

street empty—as it will be immediately after dark—you might run down it, taking one step of the stair at a step, and soon reach the bottom. A hundred paces down, and Christian Street strikes off to the left or north—a short street, as already stated, running past the Church of the Sepulchre. Another hundred paces—mostly between corn stores—and you reach the cross thoroughfares. You are now at the north-east corner of Zion. Taking the cross thoroughfare to the right, you are in the main street of the Zion district. It runs south, rising slightly as you proceed, and finds its way to Zion Gate in the south wall of the city. This street is the backbone of the Jewish quarter. It is very narrow, but unroofed, and, as it contains nearly the whole of the shops of the district, is very much crowded at all hours of the day. Here the Jew is seen in his native simplicity, and in every possible stage whether of physical growth or sartorial decadence. The prevailing male fashion is a striped frock tied with a cravat round the waist, a thin white petticoat, and slippers. The head dress is a flat-brimmed black felt hat. To hide the black hair a semicircular piece of black cloth is sewed on to the brim of the hat. But the most distinctive feature of the Jerusalem Jew is a long curl of hair in front of either ear, the rest of the head being cropped short. In Jeremiah the nations are spoken of as having the corners of their hair polled—unlike the Jews.

These men—and boys, for they are all as like each other, small and great, as though they formed a distinct species, dress and all—are for the most part of a sickly aspect. The bath seems but seldom used. Indeed, there is little bathing in Jerusalem. The Muslims, it is true, have a public bath, in Christian Street. The water is drawn from the Pool of Hezekiah, and is not at all clean. These, however, do bathe. But, in the Jewish quarter of the city, there are no facilities for bathing: water is at a premium, and people cannot afford to waste it.

Jerusalem possesses no wells whatever : dig ever so deep, you get no water. The reason of this probably is because any rain that falls on these rocky hills runs off, failing to penetrate, and there is therefore nothing to feed springs. People are driven to have recourse to tanks, in which they store rain-water. Most houses have their tank, under the floor. This is a kind of sunk flat, only it usually takes the shape of a wide bottle, tapering to a hole at the top. Through this hole the water is drawn up by means of a pitcher. In order to gather into this storehouse as much of the rain as possible not only the roof but the court and the passages are made to contribute : that small hole in the passage, in which a piece of cloth has been inserted as stopper, is opened when it rains, and all the washings of the pavement run in. Stagnant water, as this becomes, is not tempting. They strain it through a towel into a jar in the court ; but it wants boiling as well as straining ; and even then it is not quite a satisfactory beverage. The water in these tanks may have been meant in the words, "If they drink any deadly thing." Canticles contrasts with these stagnant tanks "a well of living waters." One wonders these people are not always thirsty, made so by the thought of nothing to drink. For your own part you now realize most vividly the meaning of such words as speak of a dry and parched land, where no water is.

This, the Jewish thoroughfare, lies in a kind of glen on the mountain. Probably the presence of a shallow ravine running down into the side of the greater valley may have suggested the thoroughfare. On the left hand, to one going up—that is, going south—there is no great depth of buildings : their outer edge skirts the east side of the mountain top, the back windows looking down into the valley, and eastward across the waste piece of ground below, to the south end of the Temple ground. On this side of the thoroughfare—but not so far back as these last-

mentioned houses—stand the synagogues. Many little alleys also lead off to that side.

On the right hand there are no buildings of note. Numerous alleys, however, cut in; and if you passed through any of them you would find a thoroughfare running parallel to this one, but of much less importance, containing only dwelling houses, and these of a poor description.

Arriving at the upper end of these two long thoroughfares—for they run into one eventually, near the Zion Gate—one finds an open space, a piece of waste ground. That this, the highest point of Zion, and therefore of the whole city, with such a splendid prospect across the great Jehoshaphat valley to Olivet and the wilderness beyond, should stand unoccupied seems a marvel. With the gate at hand, too, giving easy and immediate access to the vast front grounds of Zion without, with their gardens as well as cemeteries, one would have thought this a most coveted quarter. But it is not. Here the city has dwindled: it has scarcely vitality to struggle to the gate. And there, in that cattle-court-looking enclosure, they used to keep the lepers, before a hospital was found without.

The portion of this vacant ground just inside the wall as you pass towards the gate, is used as a place for depositing refuse. Here too, among the rubbish mounds, they hold their weekly market for the sale of small cattle and donkeys.

Passing outside the gate for a moment, you note a group of buildings immediately in front: these cluster about a mosque which is built over the grave of David, concerning which the Scriptures say, "His sepulchre is with us to this day." The whole top of the mountain to the west of this is a cemetery, or rather cemeteries; for different nationalities have different portions. It was here, in that small walled-in portion, that you saw the dead monk.

To the east of David's tomb, and indeed on all the slopes

of the mountain, are gardens, some of them containing huts of extremely small dimensions, in which people seem to live. Along the south base runs the Valley of Hinnom; along the east the valley, now greatly filled up, that used to divide Zion from Ophel, which latter is but a continuation, southward, of Moriah. At the foot of this valley, far below, lies the Pool of Siloam, just on the edge of the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Returning through the gate into the city, and passing towards the left or west, you enter a narrow lane. This pierces the gardens of the Armenian monastery. At the angle of the wall, where you turn north, the path widens, and you soon pass in front of the Patriarchate. It is on your right. On the left, between the street and the city wall, are gardens. The Patriarchate is said to stand on the site of the "upper room" of the Last Supper.

Immediately beyond, you pass under a portion of the same buildings by an arched way. The path again narrows—the barracks on the left—and, after some fifty paces, comes out by the corner of the barracks into the square or "broad place" by the Tower of David. You are back once more at Jaffa Street. Such is the Zion district, comprising the Jewish quarter on the east, and the Armenian on the west.

Starting again from the Jaffa Gate, and descending Jaffa Street, you this time pass the cross ways, and instead of turning to the right, up Zion Street, as before, proceed straight forward. A hundred paces of a considerable declivity brings you to the southernmost of the Temple gates on this side. Shortly after passing Zion Street, you leave Zion behind, and cross on a levelled-up portion of the valley to Moriah. There used to be a bridge in this neighbourhood, connecting Zion with Moriah: remains of it—called Robinson's Arch—are to be seen below, in the waste valley.

Instead of entering the Temple ground, you descend

into the valley by a steep lane to the right. Here, right under the great west wall of the Temple ground, are some one-storey houses, and through among these lies the route to the Jews' Wailing Place. The Jews are permitted to approach a small portion of the great wall. The space allotted to them is but of the width of an ordinary foot-pavement, and of some twenty paces in length. Here they may be seen any day, but particularly on Friday afternoons, old men and old women, leaning against the cyclopean stones, pouring forth such doleful lamentations as are fit to melt the heart of the beholder. These poor old people, regardless of appearances, come to this spot although unable to appear in fine raiment: those long black over-garments, edged with bits of fur, are not of yesterday: the gloss and the grease proclaim them to be from of old, each a possession for ever—for they have little chance of being replaced by new ones.

The portion of the wall about here is truly majestic. Be it remarked, this is not the city wall: it is the wall of the Temple ground: in the olden time it was also the city wall; but now the city wall encloses a piece of waste ground here—which it might as well have left unwallled—and, having made the circuit of that, runs northward to the great wall of the Temple ground, striking it at about the middle of the south end of that ground. The great wall is believed to be original—of the time of Herod. The stones are what antiquarians call “drafted”—that is, the edge is hewn, while the body of the surface is left rougher—and they are all of them of enormous size.

Coming out from the Wailing Place, and seeking a way into the waste space immediately to the south, one finds it overgrown with cactus hedges, and dotted with rubbish heaps. On its west side the slopes are steep, and crowned with the back walls of the houses of the Jewish quarter. On the left, as you pass southward, is Robinson's Arch, which sprung from the great wall—it is only the beginning

of the arch that remains. Immediately to the south of the arch is the corner of the Temple ground. Here the great wall turns eastward, forming the southern boundary of the Temple ground.

Passing right down the vacant space, southward, you soon reach the Arab Gate. This is a poor, stony porch, through which pedestrians only pass. By the cactus bushes within are usually some blind beggars. Many peasant women, too, pass to and fro by this gate, carrying baskets on their heads. Outside, up the steep slopes of Zion to the right or west lies the tomb of David; forward to the south lie the gardens that have all but blotted out the valley; the ridge to the left or east is Ophel—where the Temple servants used to live in the olden time, but which now has no dwellings on it—beyond which, to the east, the steep slopes run down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Climbing the ridge of Ophel, you reach the south-east corner of the Temple ground. It is here that the explorers have worked. Not that they have got doing much: the Muslim graves all along the upper slopes, just outside the east wall, have been a barrier: the people are averse to having these disturbed. About this corner, however, something was done in the way of running shafts into the face of the hill, with the view of examining the foundations of the wall. These experiments showed that the wall was originally bare much lower than at present—although the greatest depth of wall seems to have been at the other south corner: that point, over Robinson's Arch, and the once deep but now greatly filled-up ravine, was a dizzy height.

As at the Wailing Place, and down by the western of the two south corners, the stones of the wall are very large, so here at the eastern corner. The foundations, as proved by the shaft investigations, are original, undoubted; but there is little reason to question the

originality of even some of the visible portion. At all events, if it is a rebuild, it is on the old foundations.

Underneath the southern end of the Temple ground are the arched vaults called Solomon's Stables. The arching, no doubt, was planned and carried out with the view of levelling-up the southern slopes of Moriah. These lofty vaults are lighted from the great south wall. The rows of stone-built pillars supporting the arches are parallel, and resemble avenues of mighty trees. The floor is uneven, being, in fact, covered with mounds of earth and stones, so that walking about is difficult. In the corners of some of the pillars they point out holes, which they say were cut to receive the halters. This you doubt, as in a pillar in a staircase, leading up from these depths to the surface of the Temple ground, you saw holes of the same description, where no horse can ever have been. However, they call this vast vaulted space Solomon's Stables.

From the south-east corner of the Temple ground, all along northward outside the wall—it is here city wall and Temple-ground wall in one—until you reach the north-east corner of the city, and even beyond that, you walk among graves.

Before reaching the northern extremity of the Temple ground, you pass the Golden Gate. It consists of a large porch, but is built up. You recall Ezekiel's words, "He brought me back the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looketh toward the east, and it was shut."

Still going north, you come to the Stephen Gate, just beyond the Temple ground. From this gate a path leads, eastward, down the steep hill into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where, just over the Kidron, lies the Garden of Gethsemane. Entering by the Stephen Gate, you see a gate leading into the north end of the Temple ground, just inside the walls, to the left. Along outside the north



THE STEPHEN GATE, JERUSALEM.

wall of the Temple ground, as already stated, lies the traditional Pool of Bethesda—a deep walled rectangular hole, some fifty paces in length, now being filled with rubbish.

Following the thoroughfare westward from the Stephen Gate, you soon pass, on your left, the site of the Castle of Antonia, at the north-west corner of the Temple ground. Here was the Prætorium, the residence of Pilate; and it was from the stairs of this castle that Paul addressed the multitude. A little way farther west and you strike Temple Street, at a point not very far south from the Damascus Gate. Turning into Temple Street by the left, you proceed south along this gentle declivity, arriving ultimately at the point where Jaffa Street reaches the neighbourhood of the Temple ground.

All the way down Temple Street, you kept passing, on your left, short streets, some of them like tunnels, all leading into the Temple ground; likewise passages lead into the Temple ground off Stephen Street. The Muslim quarters lie on the north and the west of this lovely piece of ground, and the people make a public park of it. And a great boon it is; for the streets of the city are but lanes; its immediate girdle cemeteries; and its surroundings stony places, where one sprains one's ankles at every step; but the Temple ground is perfectly level, cleared of stones, beautifully paved in parts, and in parts a lovely lawn. Life in Jerusalem would be a very different thing were one at liberty to stroll into this clean and spacious park at pleasure. But, alas, neither Jew nor Christian may set foot there—unless by special permission, granted for payment, and valid for one visit. The first day you were in Jerusalem, you chanced to wander along this way. Seeing at the farther end of a tunnel-looking road a surprisingly fine place, so unlike the narrow, smelly lanes, you quickly made for it. Scarcely had you turned into the tunnel when the people began to

call to you. There is no law against entering the tunnel, but they knew that you were bound for the forbidden land beyond, and that, too, without permission, which necessitates the attendance of the consul's man and also a soldier and a guide. Seeing you persisting, some ran after you, and others kept yelling angrily, as though the matter were affecting them personally. One even laid his hand upon your shoulder, and endeavoured to stand in front, waving you back with all the energy he could command. By this time it had dawned upon you what it all meant. Turn back, however, you determined you would not: the journey to the end would be accomplished, and the forbidden land be at least looked at. It was no surprise, then, to find a couple of soldiers, with guns and bayonets, stepping into the gateway as you approached. Standing on the threshold you leisurely surveyed the scene, and, when it pleased yourself, withdrew. The Muslim may have learned this exclusiveness from the Jew: in Lamentations it is said, "She hath seen that the heathen are entered into her sanctuary, concerning whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation."

Returning up Temple Street, northward, and this time noting the picturesque houses that here and there stand right over the street, an arched way underneath, you pass the end of Stephen Street—which you recently came along—and continue northwards, a little farther, to the Damascus Gate. This gate, as already stated, is in the north wall, and about midway between its eastern and western extremities. A couple of soldiers are on duty, but they take no notice of you as you pass out. On the way out you observe, right in front, on a level with the ground, a manifest arch of large stones. This has been the original arch of the gate. The road, therefore, must at one time have lain at a depth of some fifteen feet below its present level. The valley—which never can have been large—has got filled up to that extent, not so much on

the inside of the gate as just in the gate and outside : outside, it is obliterated altogether. The sight of this sunk arch recalls the words of Lamentations, " Her gates are sunk into the ground."

Through the gate, you stand in the great north road. It is not much of a road : a stony bridle-path. A suburb has grown up on the left or west side of this road. At the corner, on the right or east, just at the cross roads—for here a road runs east and west parallel to the wall—is a hillock, with a cave broken out of its near or south face. This cave is called the Grotto of Jeremiah. Here they say the prophet dwelt for a time. Some years ago an American started the idea that this hillock, which he declared looked to him like a skull, must have been the scene of the crucifixion. One of his arguments is based on the fact that on this hillock there are graves. Doubtless there are : it is a portion of the cemetery, which, lining the whole east wall of the city, also comes round the north side thus far. But it is unlikely the crucifixion would take place in a cemetery. You are perfectly content with the traditional Calvary. Calvary was outside the walls, to be sure ; and the traditional spot is at present within ; but, the other day, you inspected the newly discovered foundations of a wall of drafted blocks, running north and south, and excluding that spot by some eighty or a hundred paces. Moreover, you have several times descended into a place, fifty feet below the surface, where some old cisterns of great extent are being re-dug, just by the south-east edge of the Church of the Sepulchre. The natural rock laid bare in the course of this re-excavating is just what one would have expected a rocky hillock to look like. People are disappointed at finding Calvary roofed in, and enclosed within a church ; but it ought to be remembered that if the soil has risen, so to speak, in many other parts, it may as well have risen about Calvary, and so diminished what at best was but a hillock. Isaiah

speaks of "a reservoir between the two walls." This can have been no other than the Pool of Hezekiah. If so, then Calvary, as at present located, would have been just without the walls.

Passing eastward from the Damascus gate—skirting the wall, that is, only, at a distance from the wall of thirty or forty paces, for a broad and deep ditch lies at its base—you note the pretty plantation of olives on the north side of the road. Many women and children are seated among the wild flowers, the women all in white sheets. They come out of the city by the Herod Gate opposite, and make a play-ground of this spot. You round the north-east corner of the city wall, the bare slopes on your left studded with graves, and turn south. Below lies the dry bed of Kidron in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. In a little while you have reached the Stephen Gate again.

An investigation of the district lying between Stephen Street and the north wall reveals little else than a monotony of narrow and winding alleys, many of them blind. The houses are, to a great extent, of one storey; and you can walk on the roofs over considerable portions of the district. The lanes are practically deserted: stillness reigns. There is a bazaar, however: it runs north from Stephen Street, at about the middle of the district. At the northern end of the bazaar the ground rises rapidly; and climbing this, you stand among gardens—of a poor sort. Here again, as on Zion, it happens that the highest spot is left vacant—by the wall, too, and a gate through which easy access can be had to the olive plantation without. The houses in the vicinity of these bits of garden are the most squalid in this portion of the city. With no little ingenuity you penetrate towards the Damascus Gate, eventually reaching it by a longish lane, parallel to but higher than Stephen Street. Before descending from this lane to the gate, you turn aside to call at a house just within the wall. It is recently built, and is, in its way, a mansion.

The people who inhabit it are from America. They possess wealth, and can afford to wait for the object which brought them hither—the second coming of our Lord. Good and kind people, they have won the confidence of all sorts and conditions in and about the city; and even in some of the synagogues prayers are regularly said on their behalf. The view of the city from the roof of this house is superb. Your back to the north wall of the city, you look right down the middle of the sea of houses. The district you have just come through stretches below and to the east, while the Temple ground prolongs the southern prospect on that side. To the right the city slopes upward from the south-running valley, and culminates in Zion at the farther extremity, in the background.

Underneath this elevated part of the city, and entered by a door in the exterior of the city wall just under this house, is a great quarry, from which the stones employed in building the Temple were no doubt hewn. To find one's way about in this dark mammoth-cave, one wants a guide and torches. The little door shut, the whole place is black as night. It is a wilderness of mounds, and great holes, and stone heaps—most dangerous to tread. You even dread a crash from the roof; for at several places you see a concave canopy-like formation above, and a corresponding pyramid of stones on the ground, awfully suggestive of being crushed to a jelly and buried, in a moment. Acres and acres, and still descending. Here is a drip of water from the city above. Holding the torch under the shaft of the drip, some bats fly out. These creatures can never get out of this vast prison. One wonders how they can find food. The stone of this quarry resembles chalk: you can cut it with a knife. It hardens, they say, with exposure. You are glad enough to get out of the dreadful place. Not that it is offensive in any way; but you have a sort of feeling that it has taken a good deal of care on your part to avoid falling into the numerous quarried

holes ; and that on the whole your safety is due almost as much to good luck as good watching. The quarrymen have done the work, not by blasting, of course, but by cutting around a block and breaking it off by means of wedges. Many blocks are to be seen, left of old, in process of being relieved.

Re-entering the city by the Damascus Gate, you take the western and upper of the two streets that split here like two fingers held apart. The lower one you have already traversed—Temple Street. You are now in Damascus Street. It skirts the east side of Acra. From it many steep lanes descend eastward to Temple Street ; many also over the summit of Acra into the western parts of the city. This is a narrow but busy thoroughfare : in point of importance it is almost on a par with Jaffa Street, which it joins at the crossways already referred to, where Zion Street begins. Indeed, for simplification, Damascus Street and Zion Street might be regarded as one : you can walk direct from the Damascus Gate, across Jaffa Street, and up to Zion Gate—right through the city from north to south.

A curious feature of Damascus Street is that after running about half its course towards the centre of the town, it assumes a roof. At the same time it becomes double-barrelled—the two tunnels being separated by a partition wall. At the northern beginning of these tunnels you are quite near Calvary : the Church of the Sepulchre lies but a hundred paces to the right or west. It is here, close by the end of the tunnels, that the foundations of the old city wall already mentioned have just been accidentally unearthed. From this point a lane leads to the Church of the Sepulchre. At the further end of this lane people pass through a door into the open paved court in front of the church. This is a regular thoroughfare, a stream of pedestrians continually flowing through by the paved court and into Christian Street. They shut the door at

night, however—as you discovered one evening when you thought to pass through this way. It is really no nearer to go by the church : it is a matter of choice as to which pair of the sides of a square you prefer : in either case you come into Jaffa Street : continuing along Damascus Street through the tunnel, you reach Jaffa Street direct ; taking the other route you also reach Jaffa Street, only higher up.

A further peculiarity of Damascus Street is, that, from being double-barrelled, it becomes triple : at the cross ways you have this triple tunnel pointing into the side of Jaffa Street. This spot is the real centre of activity, though two of the three tunnels show but little traffic, being handed over to a few shoemakers and fruit-sellers, who sit by the sides of the path. Light comes from holes in the arched roof : walking on the top, you had to be careful not to drop through, for the holes are ungrated.

The square space, bounded on the west and east respectively by Christian Street and the tunnelled portion of Damascus Street, and on the north and south by Church Lane and Jaffa Street, is in ruins, except a fringe along three of its surrounding streets. It is called the Hospital, having been at one time occupied by an extensive institution of that kind. The German Government owns it, and a restored portion of the buildings is converted into a church. It is fearful to look down into the vaulted cisterns under the ruins : it would be only too easy to fall in.

The Via Dolorosa is not, as many suppose, a street : it is a route, along several streets, or portions of streets. It begins at the site of the Prætorium, now occupied by the Antonia barracks, at the north-west corner of the Temple ground. Here one of those half-arches, of the kind already referred to, spans the narrow thoroughfare, and connects the barracks with a new ecclesiastical edifice belonging to the Latins. This building comprises a school and a chapel ; and its revenues are eked out by the manu-

facture and sale of cards of wild flowers culled in the outskirts. The school-girls gather the flowers and gum them on ; and some of the shops in the Christian quarter offer the cards for sale at so much a dozen. They are pretty, and many purchase them to send home to friends.

From this point—this half-arch is called the *Ecce Homo* arch—the *Via Dolorosa* lies along Stephen Street, westward of course. Arriving at Temple Street, you turn in by the left, and follow that street south a little way. At the right-hand corner, as you left Stephen Street, you passed another ecclesiastical institution.

Down Temple Street a little way, you turn to the right into one of the several steep lanes that run up from this street to Damascus Street. If, instead of taking this turn, you had gone forward a few more paces down Temple Street, you would have passed under an arch, over which rises a narrow but decidedly handsome three-storey house of red sandstone, which tradition points out as the house of Dives, at whose gate or door Lazarus was laid. It may be the site of it. Just at the corner, as you enter upon the steep lane, is a wood-workers' shop. Often have you gone in there to see the men at work on olive wood. They make candlesticks, paper-cutters, sleeve-studs, and a great variety of other things. This olive-wood-work is one of the chief industries of the city.

Pursuing your course up the lane, you pass the door—or the site of it—where tradition says Veronica wiped our Lord's forehead with a handkerchief which retained the impression of the features. Other points of a similar character are indicated by marks on the walls. These you observe as you progress. This lane is very squalid : a lady the other day positively declined to go forward, finding that her guide meant to bring her this way : she would follow the *Via Dolorosa* no farther.

At Damascus Street you cross, and follow another lane which ascends on the opposite side—or it might be as

correct to say that you follow the same lane, regarding it as continued beyond the cross-roads. The path still ascends, though not so steeply. A hundred yards and you have got to the back, or north side, of the Church of the Sepulchre. This lane continues, past the end of Christian Street, still forward and upward—you take a look at the Greek Patriarch's "Bridge of Sighs" as you pass under it—until, taking a sweep towards the left, it runs south into Jaffa Street, just inside the Jaffa Gate.

Christian Street is a short street. Its south end touches Jaffa Street, its north end the lane last described. It is uncovered, except where it skirts the Church of the Sepulchre. The roof of this portion you have looked down through: it forms a part of the open space belonging to the Greek monastery. This street is almost exclusively given up to shop-keepers, some of whom affect Western arrangements and Western goods. The Pool of Hezekiah, as already stated, lies at its west back; the great Hospital square of ruins at its east back. Candles for burning at the altar are sold in great abundance in Christian Street, as also beads, crucifixes, and such things. Under the roofed part some tin-smiths are at work in niches on the outside of the church wall: they make, among other things, jars for holding Jordan water. Here, under cover, many peasants are seated, on the edge of the roadway, enjoying their frugal mid-day meal. Here also, in a cellar, under the Greek monastery buildings, is a mill of a curious kind: it is driven by four horses walking up an inclined circular platform. This platform is in fact a wheel, and, though hardly horizontal, does the work of a horizontal wheel. The horses walk away at a brisk pace, but never move out of the spot.

The district lying between Calvary and the north wall of the city is, after the manner of its neighbour east of the Damascus Gate, still and deserted-like. If you enter it at about the Damascus Gate, and work your way west,

you experience the same difficulties in penetrating, the same getting into blind alleys, the same sense of chaos. Here, however, is the novel sight of the vast pig-sty by the wall, already noticed; a steam-mill also. These smack of the West. A blind alley, longer than usual, turns out to contain a colony of black people. This is the second black colony you have encountered—the other was on the roof of the Chapel of the Finding of the Cross. These are civil, like the others, and gladly indicate the way. You are now getting towards the north-west corner of the city. Here are the headquarters of the Latins—some handsome modern buildings, with a clock-tower. From this point to Jaffa Street the ground just inside the wall is mostly gardens.

The two busy gates are the Jaffa and the Damascus. Inside the former there is always a crowd. As for the latter, it represents rather the restful side of the city life: on the left, to one entering the city, and just inside this gate, are some Arab *cafés*, where a long row of Arab muleteers and camel drivers may always be seen seated smoking. On the other side, equally constantly apparently, is a row of girl water-carriers. These, half-clad, and struggling each with a goat-skin of water across her back, are fain to rest. They fetch the water from a rock-hewn tank half a mile out the north road, near by the so-called Tombs of the Kings. At this gate, crowd there is none.

The other gates show but little sign of life. A couple of soldiers guard the Stephen Gate; but the remaining three of the six are left unguarded. The gates used to be shut at a certain hour: now they stand open day and night. You have ceased to give "good-night" to the guards since the night when that fellow hissed a curse through his teeth. It was in the Stephen Gate: you had just come up from the neighbourhood of Gethsemane. Probably the poor man was tired of his post, with only a dim lantern to make the darkness visible.



THE DOME OF THE ROCK, JERUSALEM.

CHAPTER V.

JERUSALEM (continued).

EVERYTHING being in readiness for a visit to the Temple ground, you set out. What with the consul's man armed and in gorgeous uniform, an armed soldier, and a guide, the party present a fairly respectable appearance. After the customary formality of examining papers, you are admitted to the sacred enclosure—the Noble Sanctuary, as they call it. Numbers of Muslim women are sitting about, on the ground. A group of Nubian females, seeing a camera pointed at them, get up hastily and run.

The most interesting part of the Temple ground is the singular rock, that rises about the middle. This is said to have been the spot on which Abraham offered the ram in sacrifice. It was also, they say, the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. And it became the place of sacrifice in the Temple. It is a flint rock, unbroken—as you can see by the natural whitish outer-coating common to flint—roughly circular, and something like twenty feet in diameter. It rises some six feet above the floor of the building which is erected over it; is hollow, so that you can walk about in its interior; and has a widish opening in the top. A few steps lead down, by a hole in the east side, to the interior.

They tell many absurd stories about this rock—how it spoke to Mohammed; how, in his ascent to heaven from

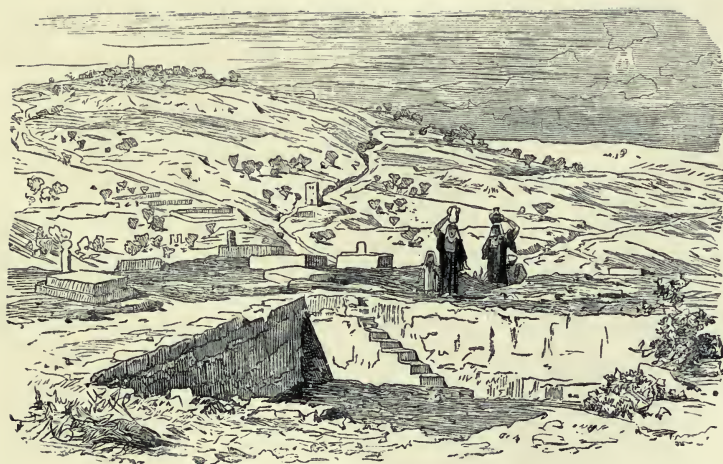
the interior, he made the hole in the top ; and how the rock desired to follow Mohammed to heaven, but was held down by the angel Gabriel, the marks of whose fingers are still to be seen.

A flat-roofed octagonal building, with a handsome dome right over the rock, enshrines this sacred spot : it is called the Dome of the Rock. A fence surrounds the rock ; and the worshippers are relegated to the space, a few paces wide, outside the fence. The building has been erected regardless of expense, the stained glass being particularly fine.

Another mosque adorns the Templeground—the Mosque of Aksa. It stands just inside the south wall, towards the south-west corner. A long building, it has no great beauty, and but little interest for the Christian. One thing in its vicinity, however, is of the greatest interest : under it is an ancient passage, a wide inclined plane, by which the Temple worshippers were wont to pass up and down to and from the Temple. The lower end, just inside the south wall, is now built up ; but there can be no doubt this massive gangway has never been disturbed : it is plainly of a piece with the great foundations which the shafts sunk in the neighbourhood by the explorers disclosed. In this very passage our Lord doubtless often walked.

You spend a good part of the day in the Temple ground, making the most of the opportunity. On the whole, however, there is little to describe : the usual fountains—supplied from tanks—the vast elevated paved flat, the boundless lawns, the venerable and stately cypress trees, combine to form a peerless public park, a very paradise in these rugged parts ; but, apart from the rock and the tunnelled passage, it is nothing.

You mount the city wall, and look eastward over to Olivet ; you turn and survey the quaint buildings that line the enclosure on the north and west—on the other



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

two sides are the city wall—and you prepare to depart. About to pass out, your attention is called to the fact that, just by the gate, is the court of justice, and the judges are on the bench. Outside the door, by a fountain or trough, a number of rough fellows are congregated. You enter the court-room. The cases are over, apparently, for the judges have the place to themselves. It is a large square room, with no furniture but some divans round the wall. On one of these, in a corner, sit, tailor-like, the two judges, smoking cigarettes—a couple of good boys, in red night-cap and print pinafore, sucking rock. They are glad to see you; salaam; offer a seat; and exchange a few observations. They seem intelligent and capable men.

This afternoon you are to take a meal with the natives in the village of Siloam. At the appointed hour the dragoman, who has arranged the matter, arrives; and you proceed southwards by the Citadel-Barracks-Lane and the Armenian Patriarchate, to Zion Gate. Outside, in the gardens, the peasant woman who is to be your hostess is at work. A word from the dragoman sends her off down the footpath into the deep valley, across the Kidron bed, and up into her village, so as to have things in readiness. By the time you reach the village, the whole of the inhabitants, apparently, are out to meet you. They have heard of your coming, and they naturally desire to see what is to be done. Toiling up the footpath—for the village hangs on the face of the hill—you meet a cow. The cow has no room to turn, and you have barely room to pass. Left to your own resources, you would have gone back; but the dragoman quietly takes the animal by the head, and holds it while you edge your way past. The meeting with the people is more formidable. They are resolved that you shall see them every one before you proceed. The men are backward, only looking on; but the women, each with an infant in her arms, so keep pulling at your coat, and holding out a

hand for a coin—a gift to the child—that you are thankful when the door of the house is reached.

They come in, however: in a moment the place is crowded to suffocation. You inform the dragoman that they must withdraw. Thereupon the woman turns them all out and bolts the door. The hubbub without tells plainly they mean to wait. You think of the Old Testament scenes where the door was besieged.

This is a fair specimen of a peasant's house. The husband of this good woman tills a piece of land, and she herself works a garden on Zion, selling the produce in Jerusalem. The house, built of stone, consists of one room. Within the door, you stand by the side of a stone fence, about four feet high, which divides the room into two parts. The outer half is set apart for the agricultural implements, the firewood, the fowls, the donkey. The inner, which is a step higher, and entered through a gateway, as it were, in the fence, has a small window, and a cemented floor. It has also a fireplace, but no chimney. The fireplace is a cemented hollow. A cemented trough over the fireplace serves for mantelpiece, and holds innumerable articles. The bed is a piece of carpet laid on the cemented floor. Two cemented bins for holding corn occupy the end of the inner room opposite to the fire. These are all the furnishings of the house.

The good woman kindles a fire, and cooks some rice and milk, the smoke meanwhile filling the house. You open the window, and look out. The window-sill is your seat.

The rice ready, it is put in a large wooden basin. This is placed on the floor, and the company sit around it, each helping himself by drawing with three fingers and thumb small quantities of the rice up his own side of the dish. The process is not so unsightly as might be supposed.

This over, the mill is produced. The hostess and her husband's sister—a young damsel dressed in the custom-

ary blue bathing-gown tied round the waist, but with a rich string of coins encircling her head—seat themselves on the floor, and grind wheat. They sit facing each other, one on either side of the mill, their right hands inward. Grasping with the two right hands the iron upright fixed in the upper stone, they make the latter fly round at a great rate. Every now and then they drop fresh wheat into a hole in the lower stone. The ground flour comes out at the other side. Here, verily, are two women grinding at the mill.

Outside, the ordeal has to be again faced : the people are pulling at you as before : you are thankful, by the distribution of some coins, to get away, descending as quickly as possible.

Crossing the gardens in the bottom of the valley, you pass over to the Pool of Siloam, which lies thus far down from the city. It is of small dimensions, and practically dry. A steady little stream flows through it. This is the only running water in these parts. It comes from Mary's Well, a little farther up the valley. How the well is supplied is not known : it appears to be fed from some spring or tank in the Temple ground.

At all hours of the day the women of Siloam may be seen fetching water from Mary's Well. It is a heavy pull up that steep footpath, with a goatskin of water on one's back.

One is amazed at the stony character of the ground all about Jerusalem. No wonder these people stoned one another. There was a deep meaning in the tempter's suggestion as to the turning of the stones into bread. So plentiful are these, that people are fain to build fences six feet thick in order simply to dispose of them ; and yet they remain. The words, "Thy saints take pleasure in her stones," may have meant to express deep devotion to the land, a love that took pleasure in even its less lovely features.

The valley is strewn with stones; but you soon reach the footpath that leads up the side of the Kidron. Following this, you by and by mount by a steep path to the Stephen Gate, and so into the city.

You keep thinking of the words of Jeremiah, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem;" for to-day you came upon a dead ass cast out from the Arab Gate. The dogs will soon eat it up. Jeremiah says further, "The dogs to tear."

Of all the bits of landscape visible from the holy city, none seems to bulk so largely in the eye, or to be so frequently surveyed, as Olivet, with its sprinkling of olive trees. Curiously, in virtue of a reciprocity more honoured in the breach than the observance, not only is Olivet the finest portion of Jerusalem's surroundings, but the view of the city from Olivet is also the finest. Again and again the stranger wends his way to about the north-east angle of the city wall, and wandering to and fro, or it may be sitting down among the graves, turns his eyes eastward across the deep valley to the restful heights beyond.

The whole of the traffic between Jerusalem and Olivet passes over the little one-arch bridge that spans the dry Kidron. You can cross the valley farther down; and there is a footpath that descends from the south-east angle of the wall—just under the Temple area—a convenient way for people who have come out of the city by the Arab Gate; but practically the whole of the traffic crosses the bridge.

Across the birdge, the road splits into four, somewhat after the manner of the radiating spokes of a half-wheel, or better, a fan. The northernmost of these paths—they are little else than footpaths—inclines towards the left as it ascends, and passes over a depression which marks the end of Olivet and the beginning of Scopus. Scopus is a rolling wave of stony land, of considerable length: it

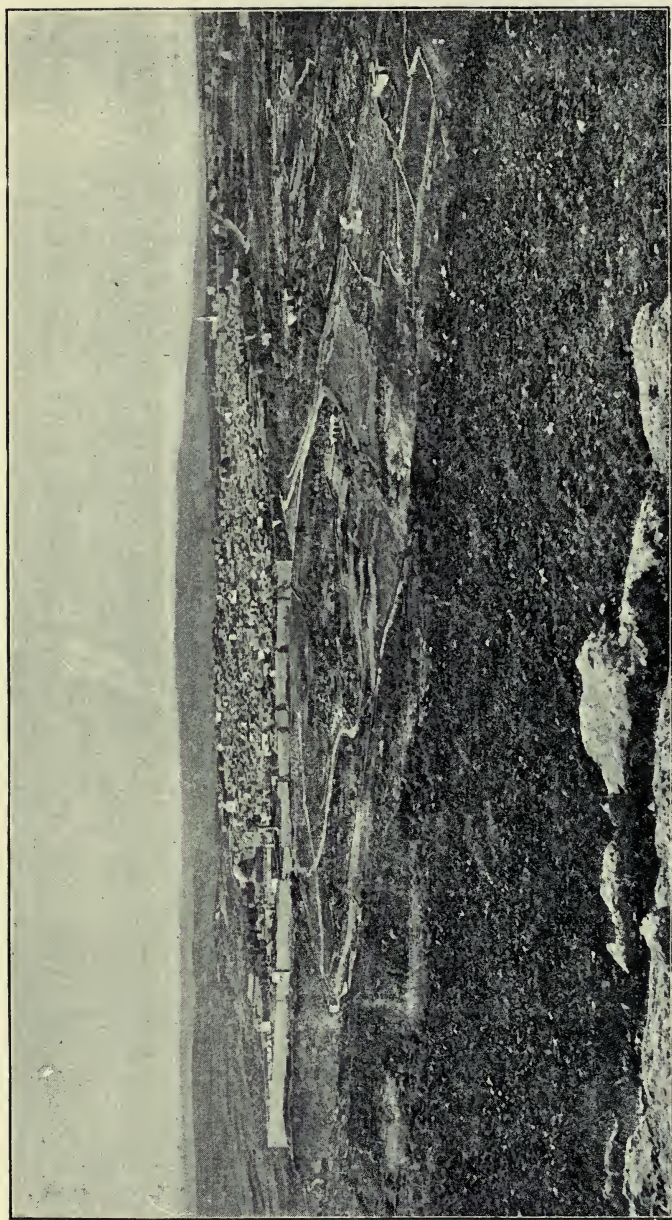
skirts Kidron valley on the east and north, and dies away towards the west. If you wished to have a look at Anathoth, the native village of Jeremiah, you would wander northward over Scopus, and look down into the hollow beyond. The second path goes right up and over the top of Olivet. The third corresponds to the first, traversing a depression between the main body of Olivet and a hump lying to the south. The fourth, much more slanting than the third, passes over a broad saddle which divides Olivet from the Mount of Offence—the hill on whose front the village of Siloam hangs. Gethsemane occupies the small space between the third and fourth paths, just where they divide.

The face of Olivet is but little built upon, the only considerable edifice being a new Russian church, surmounted by the usual five domes, and very effective of its kind. It stands a little way up the hill, on the right of the second or vertical path. Below this building, and quite on the edge of the path, are some tower-like houses and an enclosing wall. The square tower-like building is repeated higher up the hill, on the left of the same path. One day when climbing this path—and it is a climb—you hailed a man who chanced to be looking out of a window in the tower, and begged him to lead you to the Tombs of the Prophets. Descending, he came out and led you to the right of the path, across a bit of apparently vacant ground, but in reality a vineyard. Quite near the shoulder of the hill, he led the way down a hole which could only be entered in a creeping attitude. Once inside, there was plenty of room to walk about. Light, too, enlivened the scene, for a hole had been broken through in the roof of the cave. Off this cave, and penetrating the face of the hill, were many rock-hewn chambers. Whether or not these are the Tombs of the Prophets—you half doubt that the prophets were honoured with burial of this kind—they are at any rate a vaultful of

graves of no mean design or workmanship. To examine the whole of them is a work of time, and not too agreeable either : crawling, candle in hand, first into one berth, then into another, some of them being so narrow that you can hardly get out again, presupposes a certain measure of enthusiasm. On the whole, you came out to the open with a feeling of relief, glad the ordeal was over.

From this point it is no distance to the summit of Olivet. On the summit—which is broad and flat—are a village and several ecclesiastical buildings, one of which—supposed to mark the spot where our Lord taught His disciples how to pray—consists of a quadrangular enclosure, on the inner surface of whose walls the Lord's Prayer is inscribed in a great number of languages. Another building stands on the supposed spot from which our Lord ascended. Reading the account of the Ascension, one is apt to think that it occurred at Bethany : " He led them out as far as to Bethany," and so on. It is understood, however, to mean that He led them back over the flat summit of Olivet until they were opposite to Bethany, or as far back as to be in line, north and south, with Bethany, which lies in a cup below. A very lofty tower also adorns the summit. The ascent of the tower requires a good head ; but if one can accomplish it, the climb to the top is richly rewarded with a most extensive view of the land.

To visit the Tombs of the Kings, one passes out the north road from the Damascus Gate. On the right hand, a little way out, is a wooden gate, inside which is a cottage ; and a road descends to some quarry-like hollows. The woman who keeps the place, and lives in the cottage, sends her little girl with you, armed with lights and candles. At the foot of the road a gateway, to the left, leads into a quarried-out quadrangle. Its rocky sides are perpendicular and some twenty feet high. This place seems to have been meant to be flooded. On its west side is a



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

terrace, above the water mark. Off the terrace a hewn hole in the rock leads into the tomb chambers. These are of great extent, and to enter some of them you have to descend to an under storey. In these tombs the rolling stone is seen in perfection. It resembles a grinding stone, and, being placed in a sloping groove inside the door, is so arranged that it rolls down into the position required to bar the entrance. To enter the tomb, again, you have to push this rolling stone up the slope, and hold it there while you struggle in.

As for the Tombs of the Judges, these lie a little farther out the road: they are, in fact, in the southern slope of the Kidron valley—where that valley runs east and west—right to the north of Jerusalem. The land about here is studded with boulders and great ledges of rock. These rocky faces, all about, are hewn smooth, and made to represent the front of a house, the door sometimes being quite as large as that of a dwelling-house. The so-called Tombs of the Judges are the finest in the locality—for the whole side of the valley here is thick with tombs. One can hardly help inferring that the people who conceived the idea of these tombs must have seen the graves of Egypt.

It is rough work toiling over these stony slopes. And how desolate the flat-sided valley! Not a habitation is visible; and the wayfarer is rare. Silence reigns over the deserted city of the dead.

CHAPTER VI.

JERUSALEM (concluded).

JUDEA in the days of our Lord had shrunk to rather meagre dimensions. Ten miles to the north of Jerusalem you would cross the Samaritan frontier; south about the same distance you would find the Idumeans encroaching to the north of Tekoa; on the east there was nothing but Jericho, the intervening Wilderness of Judea not being worth counting; and on the west the cities towards the sea were practically Greek. The truth is, the results of the Captivity had never been got over.

The first Herod was dead; and a section of the Jews thinking their opportunity had arrived, had begun that course of sedition which eventuated in the destruction of the holy city before very many years' time. Pilate meanwhile had come as procurator of Judea, Archelaus, who succeeded his father Herod, having proved himself unequal to the duties of ethnarch. Two other sons of Herod, however, were continued in their tetrarchies—Antipas in Galilee, and Philip in Trachonitis, which latter district lay to the north-east of Galilee.

The best key one can have for the opening of Jerusalem topography is a mind well stored with the history of those times that lie immediately before and after the birth of our Lord. To stand on the brow of Zion, at the north-east corner, and, looking across the Tyropean Valley down upon the south-west corner of Moriah, to call to mind the ongoings chronicled in history which had their theatre

here, is commentary sufficient, exploration sufficient. No doubt we are indebted to the explorers who have not only found the remains of the bridge—patent enough—which we know here spanned this valley, and across which lay the road between Zion and the Temple, but who have discovered at a much greater depth another bridge. This opens our eyes to the fact that in the days of Solomon this valley would be very much deeper than in Herod's time. Indeed in Herod's time the place seems to have been filled up to about its present level: the xystus or gymnasium stood just below the bridge a little way; and there seems little room to doubt that beyond that lay the hippodrome: if the historian is correct in his directions it must have occupied the vacant space within the Arab Gate, which has already been noticed. To clear away the cactus bushes, and level the rubbish heaps, and lay out a spacious circus, would at this moment be but a work of a few hours.

The general impression one gathers, then, from a view of the locality, in the light of history, is that Jerusalem proper consisted of Zion top, and Moriah. The summit of Zion was strongly walled. The enclosure possessed a citadel, which stood where the present citadel stands—that is, just by the Jaffa Gate—and the tower at that point, already referred to, is no doubt partly a remnant of Hippicus, one of the three famous towers that adorned and defended the “upper city.” Hippicus, Phasaelus, and Mariamne were the three; but where precisely the latter two stood we seem to have no means of determining.

As for the levelled-up summit of Moriah, it contained the Temple; but it was nevertheless a fortress. Colonnades skirted the interior of the enclosing walls of the Temple area, the Temple itself standing in the middle. The colonnade that skirted the south wall, and into which the road over the bridge would directly lead, is supposed by Mr. Schick, the Jerusalem head of the Exploration

Fund, and the constructor of the wonderful Temple models, to have been that spoken of in the New Testament as Solomon's Porch.

The Castle of Antonia, which stood just outside the Temple area, at the north-west corner, on the north wall, was a second citadel, and intended for the protection of the Temple fortress.

From the fact that when assaults were about to be made on the Castle of Antonia as a stepping-stone to the capture of the Temple, the assailing body would commence operations at once, without having to fight their way through an outer wall, such as now encloses that part of the city that lies to the north of the Temple area, it must be inferred that the common city, so to speak, was not exactly fortified. The enemy had nothing to do but seek their way through the network of lanes, and set to work on Antonia without let or hindrance. To be sure, the city was enclosed within a wall; but the real walls of Jerusalem were the Temple area wall around Moriah, and the triple-towered wall that encompassed the upper city on the summit of Zion. Probably the greater part if not the whole of Zion would be built upon: when Titus had taken the Temple, and had crossed to Zion by the bridge, he drove the robbers out of the "lower city," and set all on fire as far as the Pool of Siloam—that is, right down to the south-east corner of Zion. The lower city need not be understood as being limited to the lower slopes of Zion: Acra, as well, to the north of Zion, would be a portion of the lower city: it was all lower, in comparison with the enclosed summit of Zion.

Thus the topography of at least the Jerusalem of our Lord's days—the most interesting to us—becomes sure and simple: any man standing on the spot, and letting the historic scenes flow through his mind, will not be long in coming to conclusions and forming convictions from which no amount of argument will ever again move him.

Although walls of different compass have been built around the entire city at different times, and walls of considerable strength, too, still there would have been less altering of the run of the walls had they ever been the real fortifications of the city: the several movings of them are a proof that they were never very difficult to move, and were moved only for purposes of more convenient internal arrangement. And so the enthusiast who paces the outskirts of the holy city, guide-book in hand, and prates of having caught "wall fever," might get more good from his visit were he to grasp the idea of the real walls of old, the fortifications—unless indeed he is concerned to locate Calvary.

That these things are so may be demonstrated by a reference to Titus's action after coming through the Temple fortress: he burned, as has been said, the lower city right to the bottom of Zion; but having accomplished this, he next begins wondering how he is to get into the upper city. That is to say, there was a wall within a wall.

Moreover, that the ordinary town wall was of no account is plain if one considers that Titus had encircled it with another wall, which he appears to have extemporized with considerable expedition: he would hardly have thought of enclosing strong fortifications in that way.

At all events, he proceeds to assail the upper city. By way of preliminary arrangement, he raises mounds above the xystus—that is, on the east slope of Zion, on the edge of the cactus waste. This seems to prove that the cactus waste was about at the same level as now: he would never have dreamed of building mounds in a deep ravine. He built the mounds, however, and having raised them to a level with the fortifications of the upper city, he forced his way in.

The records of the Palestine Exploration Fund do indeed throw much light on the Temple hill. For instance, to one looking at the site of the Antonia castle on the

north edge of the Temple area, it appears as if there was rather a lack of natural impediment to the attacks of an assailant: the ground outside—that is, the lie of the city on the north of Antonia—is on the same level as Antonia and the Temple area. But the explorers have discovered that the foundations of Antonia lie a hundred feet below the present surface. It is not to be supposed that there was more than a ravine or probably fosse of that depth: too much has been made of “underground Jerusalem.” Nor is it difficult to see how a ravine or fosse of that depth might soon be filled up: at the present moment a portion of this very fosse, the traditional Pool of Bethesda, stretching east from Antonia and lying outside the north wall of the Temple area, is being filled up with rubbish. It is also to be remarked that possibly the builders had gone considerably below the then level for a foundation, since the building rises right from the rock. Phœnician letters in red paint, believed to be masons’ marks, were discovered on some of the largest of these foundation stones. These marks would be made, no doubt, by the workmen sent by Hiram, king of Tyre, to work for Solomon.

The Pinnacle of the Temple is mentioned in connection with our Lord: this is supposed to have been at the south-east corner of the Temple area—although it is just possible it may have been at the south-west corner: from either height the look down would be somewhat trying, though not nearly so much so in our Lord’s time as in the days of the old Temple. In our Lord’s time the surface, as already said, may have been at very much the same elevation as now. In the olden time, however, as the explorers have shown, the ground at the south-east corner would be seventy-five feet below its present level—at all events that is the depth of the foundations here. The stones of this foundation are of vast dimensions, averaging three feet and a half in height, and some of the corner stones being twenty feet in length. They are hewn quite

smooth; the edges are drafted; and the surface of the wall is said to resemble panel work. Here also are red marks—Phœnician letters. Adding the height of the wall as it stands at present—seventy feet—to the depth of the portion below the present surface, we make out a wall of the height of a hundred and forty-five feet. Add to this a tower which stood on this corner; and the summit might well be called the Pinnacle of the Temple. The look down would be farther increased by the fact that the foundations would rest on the edge of the valley—another hundred and forty-five feet in depth, or thereby.

The gate in the south wall of the Temple area is built up, but the hall or passage within is in perfect preservation, as has been said. This would be the approach to the Temple from the south quarter of the city. It is an inclined plain; and it leads underground to the surface of the Temple platform.

At the south-west corner of the Temple area are found the largest of all the large stones: one of them measures over thirty-eight feet in length, by nearly four feet in height. This corner, the explorers have ascertained, lies on the west side of the Tyropean valley, at a depth of sixty feet below the present surface; while the bed of the valley was thirty feet lower still.

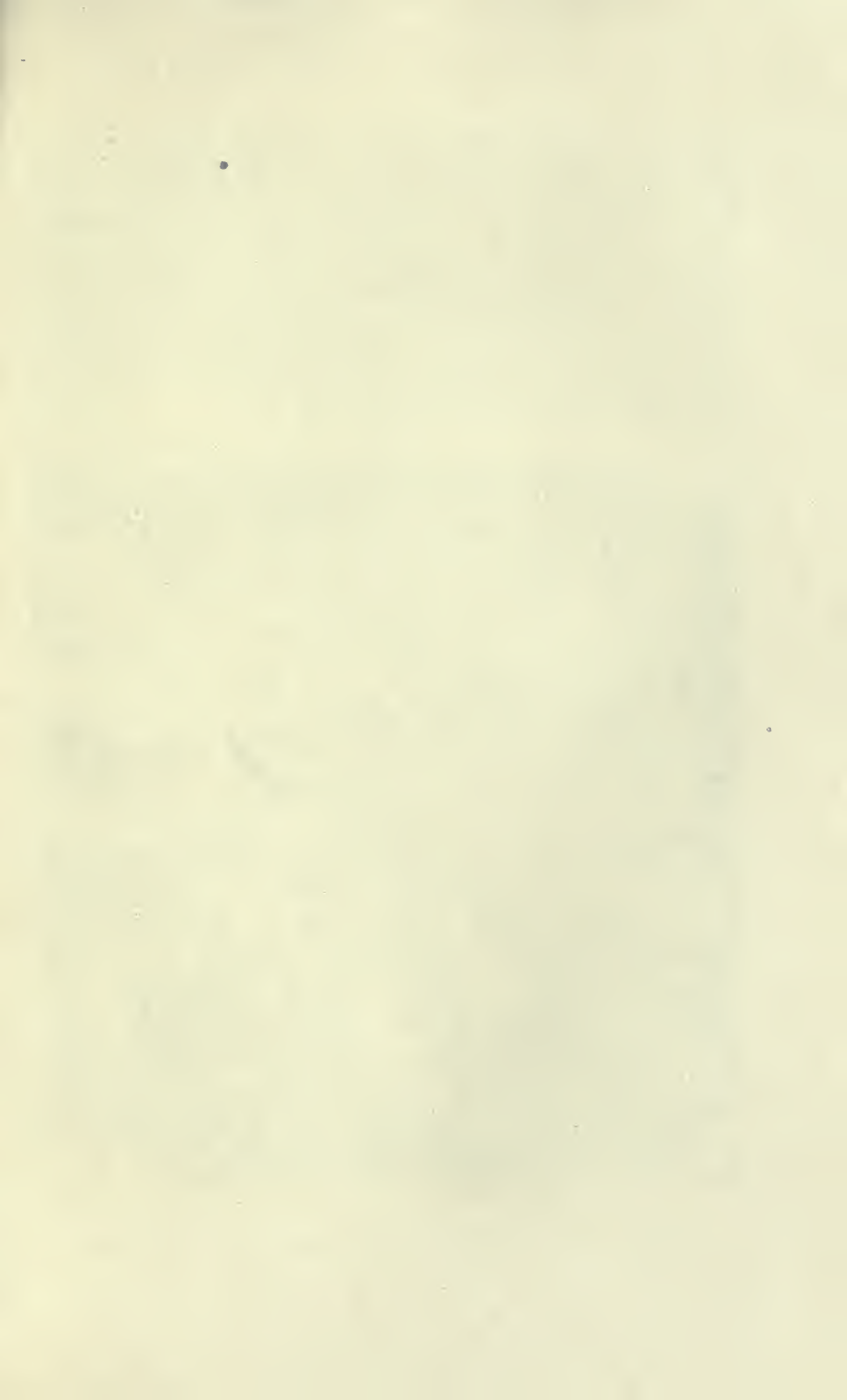
As for the bridge that once spanned this ravine, or rather what remained of the ravine beyond the wall—for as has just been said, the corner of the wall rested on rock on the farther side of it—Warren discovered the west pier at a depth of forty-two feet beneath the present surface, and at a distance of forty-two feet from the east pier discovered by Robinson. That is to say, the span of the arch was forty-two feet. The rudimentary arch, as seen springing from the Temple wall, is such as to fill the beholder with amazement, the blocks are so ponderous.

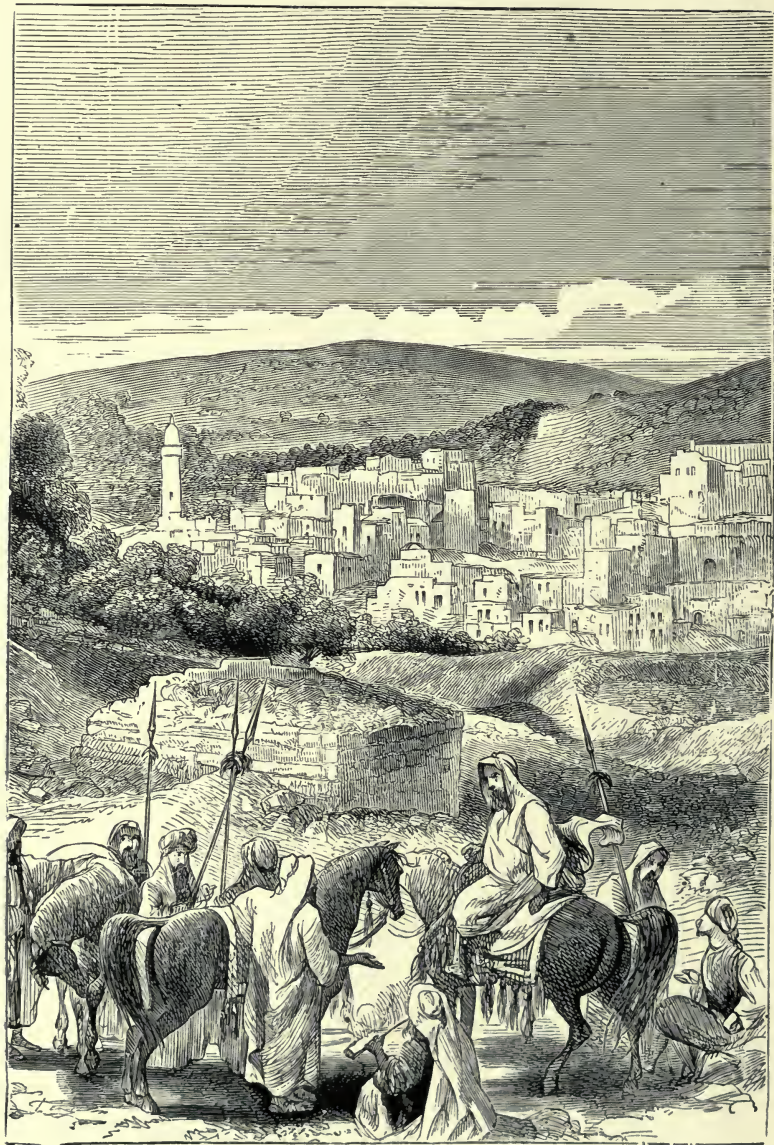
The older bridge—twenty feet lower still—must have belonged to Solomon's time.

And if the topography of the holy city is interesting to the Christian, the dispositions and doings of the people of our Lord's time are no less so. Western soldiers thronged the narrow streets, where no doubt sat the peasant women vending their fowls and vegetables as at the present day. The Jews were dispersed all over the Roman Empire, though they came in vast hosts to the feast. Alexandria was swarming with them, so much so that they had a mayor of their own, who bore the title of Alabarch. Between Jerusalem and Egypt intercourse was so easy that a travelling minstrel might carry a letter to Cleopatra from Herod's mother, announcing that she and her daughter intended to seek an asylum with the Egyptian queen; and they thought to disguise their flight by having themselves conveyed in coffins. Herod's sons were sent to Rome to be educated; and Herod himself thought nothing of undertaking a journey to the eternal city to be closeted with his plain-mannered but long-headed friend Cæsar.

The Galilean towns were densely peopled, mainly with Jews. The Zealots—that is, the section of the Jewish people who were set against submission to Rome—began to be demonstrative in Galilee no less than in Judea. From the tenets of each of the three sects—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes—one would have supposed the Jews a peace-loving people. But the Zealots in course of time lost all control of themselves, and merited the appellation of robbers. They so far forgot their allegiance to the law of Moses that they cast lots to see who should be appointed to the High Priesthood. Establishing themselves in the Temple fortress, they inaugurated a veritable reign of terror.

Things had not quite reached such a pass in our Lord's time; but that such atrocities and ongoing should be possible but a few years later throws back a lurid light on the Crucifixion scene.





HEBRON.

CHAPTER VII.

TO HEBRON.

JOSEPH the dragoman has been lying in wait for you again at the old place: he hangs about in the crowd, not quite in front of the hotel, however, because then he would be immediately under the eye of Cook's office, which occupies the corner house, one stair up, at the head of Jaffa Street, just where that thoroughfare dives into the city after passing the hotel: he keeps a little westward towards the interior of the Jaffa Gate. Not that Joseph would probably care; but he is a prudent man, and has no wish to come into collision with Cook, who may some day employ him; and therefore it is that he prefers to push his calling in a quiet way. Joseph is a capital fellow: about the age of thirty, well-built, and of a temperament not to be trifled with in an emergency, he is physically and morally qualified to conduct the traveller in and around Jerusalem—his native city—nor would he be out of his depth though asked to go much farther afield. A Jew by birth, he has been educated in one of the numerous Christian schools here, and has come out with a knowledge of German. These schools make a point of teaching the pupil one European language: the English Church school teaches English, of course; the Latin, Italian; the Greek, Greek or Russian; the German Protestant, German. It is, no doubt, also the aim of the schools, one and all, to make converts, or rather to instil into the children's unpreoccupied minds Christian beliefs.

Joseph is a Christian, and knows his Bible well, New Testament and Old.

It is amusing to hear him and an American enthusiast who has been in these parts before, and whom you call Jonathan: they were old friends when you arrived in the city, and they address each other with a good deal of familiarity. Jonathan's German is a little broken, having been picked up from Germans in America; but it is perfectly intelligible, and seems, indeed, to come more naturally to his tongue than English: he rolls it forth, as a Roman would have said, *ore rotundo*, or in good mouthfuls.

You are sometimes inclined to question the wisdom of teaching those boys European languages. No doubt, taking into account the fact that, along with a language, the boy learns to be less intolerant in the matter of religion—that is, less fanatical—than he would otherwise have been, the school is doing a good work. At the same time, it is sad to see the scramble for a subsistence among those of them—and they are too many—who turn their training to account as guides. Just the other day you strolled along the main street of the Jewish quarter. This busy thoroughfare, as already stated, takes off to the south from Jaffa Street, which, as will be remembered, descends the valley eastward by the north back of Zion. It was when gaping at a synagogue that you were accosted by a small boy. Probably he had been following you for some time: in a busy street like that, but a pace and a half wide, containing all the store-holes in the quarter, and as a matter of course packed with pedestrians, not to speak of an occasional donkey, it would be idle to look for a follower. At all events the small fellow ventured to accost you—in German, curiously—offering to conduct you over the synagogues of the city. To all appearance he would not be more than twelve years of age; but withal he had an old face, and its antiquity was enhanced

by a solid white handkerchief passing under his chin and over his ears—he may have been suffering from the childish complaint, mumps. It so happened that on that occasion you did not wish to be guided, and you told the boy so; nevertheless he persisted in following, and offering stray observations. Wherever it was practicable he would pace alongside, looking up in your face like an old man, heedless that, in his attempts at walking so, he would now fall over a customer's foot, or incur the maledictions of a merchant by treading upon his stock of dried fish—perch-like creatures with hides of canvas, which, lying by the side of the gutter, seemed not far removed from their native element. This three-feet-four gentleman in petticoats was resolved to follow up his advantage: having once got you to speak, he felt he had a claim on you; and he stuck like a leech, keeping by you right through to the Zion Gate, and down again, and thence up to the hotel door. Jonathan has a peculiar aversion to being coerced into anything: the moment a merchant attempts to thrust goods upon his attention, it is his way to pull himself up, and distinctly give the shopman to understand that if permitted to look about among the wares unmolested, he may, if he sees anything he would like, make a purchase; but that, molested, he will at once withdraw. He adopts the same course with guides. Consequently the little fellow in question stood a poor chance of recompense. At the end of the peregrination Jonathan handed him a coin about equivalent to a penny. The youthful Jew looked at it pitifully, quietly handed it back, and turning on his heel, deliberately walked away. That a small boy should be already so much of a man as to disparage a penny implies an unhealthy state of things: those children would be better occupied in making themselves generally useless about the house than in adventuring thus prematurely into the world.

Besides Joseph, there is Suliman, a smart youth, who speaks English, and holds a certificate from General Gordon. These two dress like Europeans, with the exception of the red fez. Then there is that foppish individual with long riding-boots, dark grey suit, red fez, and yellow silk shawl round his shoulders : he is a paragon of Cook's. Besides these, there are an old man and a young fellow, both in black petticoat-trouser, and black jacket : the couple hang about the inner court of the hotel, hoping to catch the eye of any of the guests as they pass in or out, or go from drawing-room to dining-room, or up the little stone-stair to the bedroom gallery. These and others scramble for the scanty patronage of the few Westerns who come here during the brief season ; and judging by the pleading accents in which they offer their services, and the time they waste in stalking possible clients, one cannot help fearing they must make but a poor trade of it. You have been to Joseph's house : it lies off the narrow street, the second to the left as you come eastward in from the Jaffa Gate. You can go by this street to the Church of the Sepulchre : it runs parallel to the city wall, first north and then east : parallel also to the west and north sides of the Pool of Hezekiah, which lies a hundred yards or so inside the walls. Calvary, as has been stated, is just a very little way off the north-east corner of this pool. Well, Joseph's house is on the height, near the elbow of the street. The way to the humble domicile is by a narrow passage to the east or right—you cannot mistake it if you look out for the lock-smith's workshop : immediately after passing the door of that busy *atelier*, where you will probably see two or three white-sheeted females bargaining about a key, you come to the lane in question. A short way into this, you found it a blind alley, on to which several mean-looking doors opened. You took the one farthest in, to the left, and found yourself in a tiny square, into which

two or three one-storey houses opened, one of them Joseph's. He was at home, and made no little fuss over your arrival : it was a promise of long-standing that you would some afternoon pay him a visit, and see his household, though you never intended to let him go to the expense of furnishing coffee, as he had always protested he would like to do. A bit of carpet covered the stone floor, and this practically constituted the furniture of the house. The wife and child were seated on the carpet. Joseph and his brother—who also had been both so seated—stood to receive you. A hubble-bubble hung upon the wall. The little stove was unlit. And that was all. Since that visit, you have often thought of Joseph's household, and, by implication, of the other dragomans' households ; and you have wondered whether they are not chronically badly off. The occasional shilling or two you have given Joseph must only have served to throw the normal starvation into sharp relief.

At all events Joseph is a happy man to-day : to-morrow he goes with you to Hebron. He will sit on the box, beside the driver—for there is a proper road, and you will drive in a coach and three—and besides having a day of it, he will take home at night a margin of the hire. Jonathan and you have agreed to pay him ten shillings apiece—surely not too much for a twenty miles' journey, with a carriage and three horses, a driver, and a dragoman.

Six o'clock, and a cloudy morning. No time, however, for strutting about, and gazing at the sky, and wondering whether it is going to clear up : if you are to go to Hebron you must start at once ; for the journey is tedious, they tell you, and it will take you all your time to do it and return before dark. The carriage waits, outside the Jaffa Gate ; and here is Joseph, looking for you. The three horses are not fiery steeds : any fire that has ever been in them has long since died out. They are yoked abreast, a favourite arrangement in these parts, but a stupid one,

for while the two that have the pole between them get a straight pull, the one on the side has hard work and little to show for it : let it pull ever so hard, it can make but little impression on the lumbering conveyance.

You soon trundle down the Valley of Gihon, Zion rising steep on your left. At the foot, the road turns abruptly to the right, across a bridge-like mound that here makes a dam of the valley. This dam is called the Sultan's Pool, after the Sultan who restored it ; but it is probably the pool called in Isaiah "the lower pool." Over the mound, you next turn abruptly to the left ; and it is a long pull up to the flat top of the mountains that here sweep round the west and south sides of Jerusalem. As you toil up this portion of the road, you look away down the great Valley of Hinnom on the left or east ; and on the right lies a row of houses—the Montefiore alms-buildings. At the top some other buildings lie on the left side of the road. That immediately on the roadside is an eye hospital ; some ruins farther along the hill, eastward, are said to mark the site of Caiaphas's country house ; and a tree on the top is coolly pointed out as being the very one on which Judas hanged himself. This mountain is named the Hill of Evil Counsel, because, as has been already said, it was at the high priest's country house here the bargain was made with the traitor for thirty pieces of silver. It extends the whole length of the Valley of Hinnom, shutting in the view to the south of the city ; and the Potter's Field, a place honeycombed with rock tombs, is a slice of the foot of this hill at the east or lower end of the valley—said to have been the lepers' quarter in the olden time : they lived in the tombs.

Right up on the level, the top of the Hill of Evil Counsel lying on your left, you are delighted with a lovely stretch of green grass, which extends before you to the south. This is a contrast to the stony places all about ; and when the traveller first sees it, he expresses surprise

to find something like a green field in the hill country of Judea after all. Immediately on your right, off the road but a little way, lies the German colony. It is a pretty village, mostly composed of detached dwellings, the property of their respective occupiers. Those people have got grants of land; and they cultivate, in addition to the vine, such crops as they need for food. You have been to the colony once or twice with Jonathan, who has acquaintances there: he knows the carpenter, who is also wheelwright and builder. The last time you were over at the colony, Jonathan purchased some wine from the carpenter. You had a look over the baker's premises too, and had to taste his sweetmeats. The culture of flowers is greatly in vogue among the colonists: the patches of garden in front of the houses are really pretty. And there is a small church, which completes the village.

But you must push on, along the east side of the grassy plain—the Valley of Rephaim. This valley or plain sweeps to the south-west; and it is up it, they say, the railway from Jaffa will come, the station being somewhere about the German village. It was here the Philistines used to encamp against David. Isaiah refers to it as a cultivated spot: “It shall be,” he says, “as when one gleaneth in the Valley of Rephaim.”

The high ground on your left is planted with vines: you came down through these vineyards the other day, on your way from Judas's tree to the German colony; and you found the vines sparsely planted, each resembling a gooseberry bush that had been closely pruned on one side, and torn groundwards on the other; or they might be stranded roots, their branches all swept one way. You were treading upon them, not thinking, at first, what they were.

This is an excellent road, of sufficient width to allow two conveyances to pass, and quite smooth. It is not exactly macadamized: rather it is of a clayey consistency; but in dry weather it does very well. This morning, how-

ever, it has begun to rain, and looks like settling down into a rainy day. Fortunately, the conveyance is a covered one, though the only way of keeping out the rain, at either side, would be by unrolling a waterproof curtain that hangs above the door; which would prevent your seeing out. Crack, crack, goes the whip: the driver evidently anticipates trouble, and resolves to make haste. The valley is soon left behind: it stretches away to the west, while your route lies south. A handsome dwelling on the right is the country-residence of the Greek Patriarch. A little farther on, on the left, is the monastery of Mar Elyas. This building lies slightly off the road. Though of considerable size, it is occupied by but a few Greek monks. A Bishop Elias is said to have been the founder of it; but it has come to be associated with the prophet Elijah; and, on the right-hand side of the road, opposite to the path that strikes off to the monastery, is a scooped rock which they point out as having been slept on by Elijah in his flight from Jezebel. No doubt he would pass this way going to Beersheba, and returning; and it is perfectly possible he may have slept here; but manifestly, if the monastery was built by a certain Bishop Elias, that fact is sufficient to account for the connection of Elijah with the place.

The road now sweeps, towards the right, round the west end of a valley, which, beginning here, descends to the east. Its terraced slopes are planted with olive trees; and the dark-red soil newly turned up shows that the peasantry have not been idle. A little way forward, beyond this valley, and you come suddenly upon Rachel's tomb. A miniature mosque is built over it. The domed structure stands on the roadside, on the right, and is unfenced. Opposite to it the road to Bethlehem strikes off. You have been here before, and therefore you must be content with a passing glance: the rain and the hurry, however, cannot prevent your going back in memory to

the touching narrative as told in Genesis, "There was still some little way to come to Ephrath—the same is Bethlehem. And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave: the same is the Pillar of Rachel's Grave unto this day." Bethlehem is indeed but a little way on: five or ten minutes through the plantation that lies on your left would bring you to it.

On the rising ground to the right, about a mile off, lies the handsome village of Bet Jala, probably the Giloh of Joshua and Second Samuel. "Absalom," we read, "sent for Ahitophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered the sacrifices." This village presents a striking appearance: it is white, and looks all new; and some of its buildings are of considerable size. The fact of its being exclusively occupied by Christians, and these mostly Greek Christians, accounts for its handsome structures: the Eastern Church spares no expense. On your left lie the gardens and outskirts of Bethlehem, skirted by a strong stone wall, built apparently by way of disposing of superfluous stones, but forming a good fence to the road. A couple of miles farther on—you have already come about five—the road meanwhile lying among low hills, you begin to wind down towards a wide valley: by this time you are in the wilderness, neither villages, nor houses, nor cultivation being visible.

An old grey castle-looking enclosure, a turret at each of its four corners, indicates that you are nearing some place of importance. This stronghold—it is on the flat, a hundred yards or so from the road, to the left—was erected, they say, with the view of keeping off the Beduins. There is no doubt, however, it was built for the protection of the famous pools that lie here, the so-called Pools of Solomon. It fairs slightly, and you descend from the carriage to walk a bit, and especially to have a drink of the spring-water at the fountain which supplies the Pools. That low square building in the middle of the little field

between the road and the castle, is the location of the fountain, although a stranger would hardly suspect it. You make for this spot, right through the field: there seems to be a crop of some kind expected, for the husbandman has been at work on it; but in these parts they do not object to your treading on their husbandry; and moreover there is no fence here. It is heavy walking, what with the numerous stones, and the soft earth made sticky with the rain; and you are thankful when the building is reached. A low door in its east side—towards the castle, in front of which sits an old man supposed to be watching—is easily opened. You stoop and enter. Inside—still stooping, for the roof is flat, and the building not much more than a yard in height—you turn to the left, and descend a straight stone-stair. The first time you came here you had a candle, which you lighted at the top of the stair; but, knowing the way now, you fearlessly descend, assured that light will dawn as you get down. At the foot of the stair you come upon the murmuring torrent, whose sound greeted your ear while yet in the field above. You want to step cautiously, for though there is no danger of drowning, you do not wish to fall and get yourself drenched, with a long journey to go. There is just room to stand by the side of the torrent. From this point it is an easy step across; and you soon gather courage to step it, for the rushing water shows the other side sufficiently to guide you where to land on. Once over, it is easy to find your way up the stream a few yards into a cave, lighted from the roof. Here, at your feet, the water issues from a pipe, a constant stream, some six inches in diameter. You are provided with a half orange-skin, which you use as a cup; and nobody who has never been long badly off for water can appreciate the relish with which you toss off skinful after skinful.

When you climb the stair again, and come forth to daylight, you see the carriage has gone on in advance. You

plod back to the road ; and as you do so, your eye wanders to the western horizon in front of you. Far up stands a solitary dwelling—a monastery, of course. The desolation around it is appalling : all the way between you and it is a dreary waste. There are marks of vegetation, but what catches the eye is the profusion of boulders : they seem at first sight a fabulous flock of ox-sized sheep. Never did man lay down barrier so impassable. Or is it a great glen-wide gravel-walk, raked to a level, for the feet of awful spirits ?

Turning on to the road, you cast a glance to the left, down the glen by the pools, thinking of the days of Samson who dwelt here on the rock. That round hill on the right or south side, where the valley bends northwards towards Bethlehem, is the site of Etam, showing only a few ruins. Had Samson established himself in the boulder tract, he would have given his pursuers some trouble to catch him.

Your road winds, by the right, up a glen in front. The carriage still goes on. You prefer, seeing that it keeps fair, to follow it on foot. By and by you have overtaken and passed it. The road here is a long southward ascent. On the left is a wall of rocks ; to the right another waste stretches indefinitely to the horizon, only not so thickly bouldered as the last. It is not an impassable tract, but you would say it was rarely trodden by human foot : you could not imagine any one ever attempting to cross it, for it is wilderness, leading nowhither. And yet—strange sight—here comes a human being, all alone, across it. You contrive to meet and stop him. The man seems scared—pursued by the Furies. Nothing of the kind : though rather tattered, he has his wits about him, and he informs you in German that he is making for Jerusalem. Most probably he has deemed it safer, being alone, to avoid the highway, for fear of robbers—although, poor man, he would not be worth robbing.

Getting into the carriage at the top of this protracted ascent, you are driven along the level, still south, for a mile or two, and then down into a broad dreary valley, which you cross. Then another valley has to be crossed; and you find the hills growing less bleak. By and by you pull up at a spring on the left side of the road. Men and horses are alike ready for a drink. Several people are here, drawing water: they seem to come from over the heights behind the well. There are rock tombs all about; and you feel drawing near to human habitations again. On the top of that bush-covered hill to the west are the ruins of Beth-zur. It is mentioned in the Book of Joshua; and Nehemiah speaks of "the ruler of half the district of Beth-zur." Tradition has fixed upon this as the locality of the spring in which Philip baptized the Eunuch. It is, to some, doubtful whether the road from Jerusalem to Gaza would pass this way. At the same time, this fountain exhibits traces of having been held in great esteem; for the building of the enclosure about it has been a work of considerable magnitude; and there are traces of a Christian church on a platform above it.

Farther on, on a hill to the left, are the ruins of a village, and of a mosque. This is said to be the burial-place of Jonah; though other localities dispute the honour. Round to the left, among the hills, but now in regions of cultivation, you descend into the vine-clad valley which by and by opens into the great glen in which Hebron lies. The country is fertile here, and well-cared-for. Before coming in sight of Hebron, your road lies along a rich hollow. In front is a thickly wooded part; on the right, a little way back from the road, stands a monastery in the midst of gardens—a more tempting residence than the one behind the bouldered tract. Through the wood, you come out into a grand crescent-shaped glen. Its concave side lies towards the south-west. You cross it forthwith, at about its middle. To your right,

as you cross, lie, half an hour off, the Oaks of Mamre ; to your left, a little way, lies Hebron, along the foot of the mountain, and spread up its face. Your destination is a Khan on the west side of the glen, over against the town.

This is a grand country : it is refreshing to see cultivated hillsides and well-watered dales : a pleasant change from the arid stony mountains about Jerusalem. These vineyards in the hollows are very extensive ; and they look well-tended. The vines are grown in the same style as in the north—each plant sprawling by itself, like a broken-down gooseberry-bush—but the great tracts of vine lands here present a striking contrast to the little corners and occasional fragments you have been accustomed to of late. You would say this was a thriving neighbourhood. And now that you have looked upon its shadowy mountains and great green glens you no longer wonder that it wanted a proper road all to itself.

Hebron is not a very large place : it is said to contain about ten thousand inhabitants, mostly Muslim. But it is a busy place ; and you can now understand why there should be so much traffic on the road to the south of Jerusalem : often when wending your way on foot along the Plain of Rephaim towards the holy city, you have been surprised to meet covered conveyances—of the rudest description—packed with peasants, southward bound. Some of these, you thought, might be going home to Bethlehem, or to Bet Jala ; but the destination of the rest you could not guess : now you perceive they would be returning to Hebron, after disposing of the water-skins—of which great quantities are prepared here from goats' hides—or the blue glass rings which the peasant women about Jerusalem are so fond of wearing on their arms.

The Muslims have held this place for the last seven hundred years ; and they have given it a Muslim name, El Khalil, or " The Friend," meaning Abraham, the

friend of God. In the Epistle of James it is written, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God." It is an extremely ancient place, so ancient indeed, that its origin is lost in obscurity. The Book of Numbers says it was built seven years before Zoan, the capital of Lower Egypt. This, however, does not throw much light on the matter, because it is doubtful when Zoan was built. Egyptologists say it was the capital of the fourteenth nome of Lower Egypt; but so utterly at sea are they as to its age, that they are fain to fall back upon the statement made in Numbers, and to seek satisfaction in the hollow deduction that it was built seven years after Hebron. At all events, Abraham, according to Genesis, dwelt here: "Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." And the chief interest of the place lies in its connection with the Patriarchs: here, in the Cave of Machpelah, lie the mortal remains of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah—as for poor Rachel, she sleeps apart, fifteen miles to the north, by the wayside, under the little mosque you passed this morning, opposite to Bethlehem. Could you get at the bodies in the cave, Jacob's, no doubt, would be found to be the most perfect: he was embalmed in Egypt; and probably his features remain tolerably intact to this day.

It was from about here that the spies carried back to the camp the cluster of grapes: "They went up by the south," says Numbers, "and came unto Hebron. And they came unto the valley of Eschol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it upon a staff between two." The narrative says "they cut down a branch": in all likelihood they would simply pull up one of the gooseberry-bush-looking vines—they have little root—which would be grown here the same,

as those you see at this moment. Their attention would be attracted to a specially rich one : casting about for a pole or branch, they would push it through the bush, and two of them would swing the burden on to their shoulders.

Hebron was made a city of refuge in the days of Joshua. Kirjath Arba, or the city of Arba, was its original name.

The place is a good deal associated with the name of David : it was his capital during the first seven and a half years of his reign over Judah. It was here, in this period, that Joab and Abishai avenged themselves on Abner for the death of their brother Asahel. "And they buried Abner in Hebron." It was to Hebron that Rechab and his brother Baanah brought the head of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, thinking to please David by the assassination of his rival. "And David," says Second Samuel, "commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up beside the pool in Hebron. Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron." From Hebron David moved to Jerusalem, and took it from the Jebusites.

It was to Hebron that Absalom came when raising the rebellion ; and from here he sent to Giloh, now called Bet Jala, opposite Bethlehem, for Ahithophel, his father's counsellor.

The place where you put up your horses can scarcely be dignified with the name of Khan : it is only a roofless wooden shed. Some buildings alongside, you are not greatly reassured to learn, are the hospital of Hebron, and the quarantine. You are on the west side of the glen : Hebron lies opposite. Before descending the rocky slopes and crossing to the town, you desire, just out of curiosity, to see what sort of quarters the horses are to have. Well, this is deplorable : not a bit of straw or hay to be seen : the bedding of the animals is a thin layer of much-trampled chaff, which you verily believe they will be constrained by hunger to try to eat : nothing will be

given to them but a handful of grass. Not even will they get a good drink ; for the water is brown with the rain. You are at a loss whether to pity man or beast most, in these inhospitable parts.

A young man from the shed, an acquaintance, evidently, of Joseph's, accompanies you to the town. Poor fellow, he must be glad to get away for a little from his miserable quarters : he and an old man keep the hostelry, such as it is ; and their private apartment consists of a kind of cupboard in the shed. A bed monopolizes the small enclosure, everything else being either packed under or laid upon it. Truly, to these people life is but a journey : scarcely worth one's while attempting to get settled down.

To the south of the shed lies a piece of waste ground, sloping to the bottom of the valley. Down this smooth rocky slope you descend, southward at first and then towards the left, by a circuitous route to the square pool, where David hung up the bodies of Ishbosheth's assassins. It is raining heavily, and the pool is full. Not only so, but the approach to the town, round by the north end of the pool, is flooded : to get over, you have to walk on the narrow ledge, at the risk of falling in. It looks deep ; and is too contracted for a comfortable swim. Past the pool, you descend a few paces to the stream which flows, in rain, southwards through the glen. To-day it contains water, though you can easily walk through it. About four paces wide, it is so full of stones that you need not hesitate, looking out for a convenient crossing, but walk straight in. Immediately on your right hand as you cross, the stream flows under some arched buildings. Across, you are in a street that leads straight up into the town. Despite the steady downpour, the natives are about in great numbers, young and old. You have penetrated but a little way when you are pounced upon by an old man, whom you take for a beggar. Grey-bearded, and of a good Roman type of face, he might have

passed for one of the patriarchs—Abraham himself—had he been better clad. As it is, the discoloured clout round his head, and the soiled white frock all open at the breast, and the jacket of natural sheepskin, wool and all, are more suggestive of a half-witted mendicant. It appears he is the sheik of the place, and has come to assert his right of conducting you about, or at least of dogging your footsteps and claiming a fee. Drenched, his garment sticks to his breast.

Joseph would have him sent about his business, with a small coin. The shivering wretch objects, however, to being dismissed; and he sets up such a cackling that you deem it advisable to give orders to proceed at once, and let him come: the populace are beginning to mob you. Probably they are drawn by curiosity, as not many strangers find their way to this stronghold of fanaticism; but you have heard some queer things about the people of Hebron, and, if all be true, you would not be surprised were they to grasp at the pretence of supposing that the old man is being ill-used, in order to furnish themselves with a kind of ground of excuse for setting upon you and stoning you. Probably Christians have themselves to blame for these things being so—if they are so. The spirit of Islam is something better than this; but it is possible this may be the view taken by the more fanatical, such as you have here. You call to mind, too, the whispers you have recently heard in Jerusalem about a certain German prince, who when here was molested and assaulted in the street, and had to draw his revolver. You would rather escape a collision: consequently you move quietly forward, studiously avoiding knocking any of the youngsters over, and smiling upon all and sundry—hypocrite that you are.

This is a street of some length, narrow and badly paved. It is a main thoroughfare, and contains some paltry stores or shops. By and by it is roofed; and you

are in the bazaar. This bazaar street is loftier and wider than any in Jerusalem : so wide is it—though still comparatively narrow—that it admits of a kind of low stone shelf along either side, on which the merchants sit and exhibit their wares. There is a considerable throng here to-day, no doubt seeking shelter from the rain. You have the impression of being in a damp vault : the whole thing is stone—stone walls and stone arched roof. The rather sparse roof-lights, too, add just the necessary touch of gloom to suggest a place of sepulture. The merchants are sufficiently alive to their own interests to dissemble their fanaticism—if they feel any—and to assume a measure of courtesy, while they invite your attention to their goods. A great deal of silk seems to be sold here, though of course the people manufacture none. The red fez, too, is a plentiful article. But you push on : merchandise is not your object : you are going to the Cave of Machpelah.

Arriving at the upper end of this bazaar street, you come into another, similar, running at right angles to it, both ways : you turn to the left. At the farther end, you emerge into daylight, and strike up a steep lane to the right. This brings you to the north door of the mosque. You are now at the back or top of the town, some little way up the face of the hill. The sheik still follows ; but his affectation of power soon evaporates, when the loafing worshippers who have got wind of your approach come out clamouring and forbidding your entrance. There seems to be nothing for it but to submit : it would be fatal to push your way in, albeit this might be done, there being neither door nor gate to shut against you. It is curious that all the most sacred spots of the Muslims, spots which the unbeliever dare not set foot upon under penalty of death, should be sufficiently guarded by the two words "Dare not" : day and night the doorways are open : there is no door to shut.

The young man from the khan suggests that you try the police. Well, no harm in trying: besides, a visit to the police office will be an extension of your acquaintance with the place. Content, then, in the meantime, with a look into the court of the mosque, you proceed along by the back wall, and down by the south end. It is a long building, plain, without a dome, and flanked at either end with a square minaret. The whole is white-washed, and gives the impression of having been built from the point of view of utility rather than elegance: it has plainly been reared for the purpose of enshrining the cave that lies below.

The journey to the headquarters of the police is not long: you take to the left on reaching the level, and work through narrow lanes to a spot on the south side of the first bazaar street you entered on your way up from the stream. These official buildings are not much to look at: this is a small quadrangle, paved and clean, the only indications of the nature of the place being the sentries at the entrance, and one or two men in soiled blue uniforms seated on the steps over in that corner. The open gratings in front of some of the windows might give a farther clue, were it not that these rather suggest disused warehouses. While the dragoman and the native youth proceed up the steps to the interior, you dive your hands into your pockets, and leisurely survey the upper storeys. While gaping thus, you step backwards to get a better view, when all of a sudden you begin to be aware of something nibbling at your collar, as if trying to establish a secure hold before applying force. In an instant it flashes upon you that you have been imprudent enough to stand with your back close to the grating. As if to extricate yourself from the dread grip of some awful beast in a menagerie, doubtful all the while whether it be of the tiger species, and the fingering that you feel be the claws of its outstretched fore-paw, or some long-necked creature

whose lips are gathering up your clothing preparatory to laying hold with its teeth, you wrench yourself away with a strong swift movement, and never stop to look round till you have got to the middle of the court. Facing the aggressor, with inquisitive eye you take stock of him, and are not a little relieved to see a human being smiling good-naturedly as if amused at having startled you. It is only a prisoner: the hand that fingered your collar was outstretched to call your attention: it is now held out begging a little tobacco, or a coin. The poor fellow had hoped to catch your eye before his fellow-prisoners should discover your presence: now there are half a dozen hands sticking out, and the grating does indeed suggest a cage of wild beasts. It seems to be the way in these eastern lands to shut the prisoners up together, and permit their friends to come and talk with them through the grating. You recall Isaiah's words, "They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit."

One of the police is sent with you: thus fortified you return to the mosque. There is still some hitch, however, though you cannot make out what it is. You suspect that bribery is desired, and you have no objection to put your hand in your pocket if a few coins would get you the *entrée* for which a special firman of the Sultan was necessary in the case of the Prince of Wales. You are right: it is a bribe that is wanted, and the native youth is indignant that anything beyond the merest trifle should be demanded for the privilege of seeing nothing after all. The cave, it appears, is not seen by any visitor to the interior, and was not seen by the Prince of Wales, as it is quite under the floor of the building: the so-called tombs shown are empty structures, mere monuments. All the same, you would rather have entered; but you thought it prudent to withdraw your men when you heard loud and angry words among them. If you had the thing to do over again, you would enter the mosque without any trouble.

Hebron is a long straggling place. Unlike the towns of Palestine in general, it lies on a flat—the almost level ground on either side of the stream—although, as you find in your wanderings through it to-day, it is built partly up the face of the hill. It consists of four quarters; and this fact has given rise to the inquiry as to whether its original name Kirjath Arba meant City of Arba, or City of Four, the word “arba” meaning four. There are two quarters on either side the stream: you passed one of them, on your right hand, as you approached the pool, on your way down to cross the stream; another, long and narrow, skirts the same side of the stream farther up; the third and chief is that you have spent most of your time in, and that takes its name from the great mosque above it; the fourth lies a little way up the stream, and takes its name, too, from a mosque, a beauty, whose minaret is the finest feature of the town. The houses are mainly of stone, and domed, like those of Jerusalem.

After an indiscriminate wander, you pass out by the pool, up the rocky slope, the cemetery on your right hand, and, at the upper corner of this, very appropriately, the hospital—and, unpleasantly suggestively, your khan. But the sight of the olive plantations that encompass your goings is refreshing, and takes your thoughts off hospitals and all such horrors. On your left hand rises an olive wood up the hill-side; in front, above the cemetery, and up the hill, beyond the road on which stands your khan, rises another; behind you, in the bed of the stream, are olives; olives also clothe the mountains around and above the two eastern quarters of the town: on all sides lie olive woods.

Back at the khan, your next move is in the direction of the Oaks of Mamre. Arranging that the carriage shall start at such an hour, and proceed on the return journey, you set out to go on foot to the oaks, intending to join the Jerusalem road by a cross-path. Your route lies along

the glen, northward and then westward: the oaks are at the western point of the crescent. A part of the way you follow the lovely road you drove along when arriving. It is beautifully shaded by trees. But you have got only a little way along when your attention is attracted by shouting behind. Here comes the old sheik, running and yelling and gesticulating, as if frantic at the thought of letting you go without getting something from you. He has been resting somewhere, evidently, and has just awakened to learn that you are on the wing. It is hopeless to think of taking the creature along to the oaks: you bid the native, therefore, give him the customary tribute, and send him back. Something like sixpence suffices to dry his tears—for he has been literally weeping—and so he returns to the town.

A little farther along the north road and you find a path taking off to the left, that is to the west. This path keeps the hollow of the glen; and, though it is actually a made road, fenced with a wall on either side, you are disposed to regard it as the bed of a stream. To-day it especially resembles this; for the rain has covered it with water, rendering it untraversable. It is rough and stony at the best, however, and only a pace wide; and you are fain to mount the fence on the north side, and walk along the edge of the adjoining vineyard. The ground here is level with the top of the fence, a circumstance which still farther strengthens the impression that the road is but a torrent course. But bad as you found walking among stones and water, up here is little better: the loose earth is wet on the surface, and, sticky like glue, lifts with every step. You wonder what pleasure the native can find in this voluntary penance: the poor fellow evidently expects nothing in the shape of recompense: he is here because you are his guest—or at least your horses are. Possibly he is glad of the little variety: life at Hebron must be rather monotonous. Whatever the explanation

of it, here he is, already drenched, and now pushing on amidst such difficulties as render the journey pure wretchedness. One good thing his presence does: the sight of his courageous endurance is a reproach to your inward grumbling; and so you reconcile yourself to the situation. Half an hour of it brings you to the desired spot. Well up the glen, you ascend the north slope, and stand beneath the branches of the great oak. Behind the oak, a little farther up the slope, and facing south by east, stands a Russian hospice. The gardens belonging to it occupy both slopes. A woman from the house, having observed your arrival, appears on the scene: she carries a small basket containing acorns, and these she offers for sale. Looking around, beneath the branches of the oak, you find two or three fallen specimens. You pick them up, and, plucking one or two from the tree, give the acorn-seller to understand that these are the ones you wish to take away. She is content, so long as she receives a trifle. She then conducts you round the tree, pointing out the places where it is clasped, and how it is built up with stone and mortar, and altogether what a decrepit old thing it is. Whether or not you can accept the traditional belief that under this very tree Abraham used to sit, at all events to look at it is to be forcibly impressed with its evident great antiquity. What a monster in size! Its girth is over thirty feet; the trunk rises some twenty feet before dividing, and then parts into four magnificent branches, which cover an area some thirty yards in diameter. There are larger trees in the world; but this is a very huge specimen of its kind—the holm-oak—and, along with the two or three somewhat smaller ones dotted on the hill-side, it gives an old-world look to the place. If these are not the identical trees of Abraham's time, they are in all probability descendants of them: here, beyond question, is the spot spoken of in Genesis in these words, "The Lord appeared unto Abraham by the Oaks of

Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day"—on the way to Sodom, not so very far off. Every square foot of the place is sacred ground. You pay little attention to the Russian building, deeming it rather an incongruity: at the same time, you are glad to think the old trees will be taken care of. Walking once more round the great trunk; and looking wistfully, and with a feeling not very far removed from awe, on its wide-spreading arms, clad as they are with abundance of green leaves; you turn to descend the slope, through the garden, and down to the watery track again. Along the vineyard side—back the way you came—and you bid the native "farewell"; and clamber up through a wooded slope; and so make your way by a short cut to the Jerusalem road, which here passes behind the wood out of the crescent-shaped glen of Hebron, into a north-running valley.

Soon the rumbling of the carriage is heard; and you are once more on your way to Jerusalem. The rain has abated, happily: since the time you set out to go to the oaks it has been fair, and now it promises to be a tolerably fine afternoon. And so you contemplate the tedious journey more hopefully than you had anticipated. It is dry and hot, driving between these stone walls; and you begin to wake up to the fact that you have tasted no food since the early morning. Evidently the excitement of the scenes, and the presence of too much water, had combined to make you forget your almost insane craving for a clear spring where to get a good drink. You are looking forward to another good pull at the spring of Dirweh; but that is a long way ahead. After that, you will have no opportunity, for days, of getting good water. You will therefore drink your fill at Dirweh, thinking of Philip and the Eunuch: there will be no time for running across again to the underground spring that supplies the Pools of Solomon: past Dirweh, you must make up your mind to be thirsty again day by day, and all day. Never, till

you came into the hill country of Judea, had you thought how habitually hungry the poor must be : as thirst with you, so with them hunger : it is the thinking about it that does it.

Seeing a man a hundred paces in front about to leave the road, you call to him to stop : you wish to ascertain whether the large building in the garden a little off to the left is a likely place where to get some good water. The peasant shakes his head, and simply replies that the house in question is some religious institution. You would gladly go up to it, did it look inhabited ; but the driver puts in his word, reminding you that the day is waning, that a long road lies before you, and that there is still the dread possibility of your being caught in a heavy rain. You submit to his authority, for he knows best : an orange must suffice for drink. Out, then, with the lunch ; make a table of your knees ; eat while the horses run. Poor beasts ! they have eaten but little : that you are prepared to vouch for.

Sure enough the driver's prognostications have come true : there is the rain. Hear the crack of his whip, and the whooping and yelling with which he urges the beasts on. The storm is closing round you : soon the wet is dripping off your shoulder, and the wind whistling through the conveyance. At Dirweh you stop, and both man and beast drink their fill ; but you are fain to beat a hurried retreat back to your seat in the corner ; and you are off again. From this point on, it is a struggle with the elements : no more concern for sight-seeing : well for you that you used your eyes and wits on the way out. Down the long decline—you are only half-way to Jerusalem—on your left the open wilderness with the storm coming sweeping over it, you hail with joy a wooden hut by the wayside : it is occupied by a couple of men who work on the road. They have an apology for a fire, and are making coffee : let the driver have a cup, for he seems benumbed.

You spend five or ten minutes here. The night seems disposed to close in, although it is barely evening. And the horses are showing signs of giving way. You divide among the three what bread remains from the lunch—not much—and start again. By this time the road has become quite soft: the wheels sink a couple of inches at least. And why will the driver persist in cutting the edge so fine? You would think the rest of the road was full of conveyances, so close does he keep to the side. Again and again have you given yourself up as wrecked, feeling the wheels going quite over the brink, and anticipating a tumbling and rolling and crashing of the whole concern.

Here, again, the road has been washed away: instead of constructing a channel underneath, where a stream in rain will cross the road, they let the water come on and find a way for itself; consequently the labour of levelling-up is all undone, and here is a chasm. The horses are unable to proceed: you descend and push, Joseph and the driver also coming off the box. From the Pools—seven miles—there is little more riding: on a hard level bit, or down-hill, you get in; but soon another stop, and you are out again, wading to the ankles, pushing frantically, the rain beating about your ears, and the darkness deepening. Truly thankful are you, mainly on the poor beasts' account, when having traversed the plain of Rephaim, you begin at length to descend into the valley that sweeps round the south-west side of Mount Zion: the pull up, though steep, is on a hard road; and it is not far to the top, where stands the Jaffa Gate, outside which are the stables of the horses—such stables as they are. Many a weary journey those poor animals have had to make; but never a worse than they have made to-day: may their rest be sweet!

As for yourself, you hurry or rather hobble in through the gate, as fast as your drenched and dilapidated con-

dition will allow. You find the hotel in consternation about you ; for dinner is ready, and it is half-past seven. You now see how necessary it was to start not later than six—as the dragoman tried to impress upon you. Though Hebron is only twenty miles off, the way is so hilly, and so ill-adapted to rainy weather, that the journey amounts to a considerable undertaking : you would hesitate before trying it again.

You have brought Joseph into the hotel, just for a moment, to settle accounts with him : his heart is rejoiced when he finds you have added a trifle to the stipulated sum. He well deserves all he has got—not much, after all.

Scarcely have you got seated at dinner when the tall black waiter comes stealthily along and whispers in your ear that a man is waiting in the court to receive the money for the hire. This is always the way with these Orientals : not that they mean to steal a march upon each other ; but so little coin do they finger, that one is more eager than another to be the first to get hold of it. This man is a little disappointed at having been forestalled. On hearing, however, that you have already settled with Joseph, he makes off as fast as he can : it is as well, no doubt, to secure his share before the whole has had time to leak away.

CHAPTER VIII.

TO ADULLAM AND MAR SABA.

JOSEPH has several times attacked you about an expedition to the Cave of Adullam: he proposes that Jonathan and you should have yourselves escorted by him and another native, all four on horseback. The journey will be a long one, as the monastery of Mar Saba is to be thrown in, and that will necessitate a circuitous route.

While the road is good you are to gallop: the time will come, soon enough, when you will have to dismount, man and horse searching for a way where beaten track there is none. It is easy work so long as you are on the Hebron road: you leave the highway, however, on reaching Rachel's tomb: here you strike off to the left, as if going in to Bethlehem. Instead of going there, however, you take the narrow walled-path that leads eastward. Soon this brings you to the summit of the ridge below which, to the south, lies the so-called Field of the Shepherds—the field of Boaz of old—the lovely green flat which they point out as the spot where the shepherds were tending their flocks when the Nativity was announced to them. The field lies immediately below and east of the east-and-west running ridge on which Bethlehem is built.

You keep to the left, getting farther away from Bethlehem, and descending into the valley in a diagonal fashion. It was pleasant on the summit of the ridge, among the olives; and even down its long steep side the footpath

ran well-marked over the old turf; but by the time you reach the bottom, path there is none. Down the valley to the left, eastward, and now you have dismounted; for the slope along which you have to go is so steep that it would be risky to ride: your horse might slip, and roll down into the dry bed of the stream. By and by, turning southward, you perceive, lying below, on your right, a stretch of green flat which they call Solomon's Gardens. The verdure is produced by the overflow of water from Solomon's Pools, farther up the valley. You came partly down that valley one day, walking from the Pools to Bethlehem; and you saw how fresh and green it was in the bottom. But it uses up the water: that is, before you get to the east or lower end of the valley there is no trace of the stream, and soon an end of the greenness.

Diving into the defile, towards the left, you have to take to the dry bed of a torrent: both sides of the glen are too steep for a path. Nothing for it but to tie the bridles round the horses' necks, and leave them to follow as best they can. This is awful work: see that horse in the stony channel seeking a path among boulders bigger than itself. You climb up, and get on to a ledge of rock, along which you make your way for a space, and then jump down on the gravel in the corner. You wonder the horses can manage to get along. After working long towards the right, you come out, to the left, on a small open. Here the stream takes a bend eastward, cutting into the base of the southern side of the glen. You are startled by coming suddenly upon an encampment of black tents. Of all the unapproachable dreary spots you have ever seen, this is about the worst: this little community of three or four families is practically as utterly cut off from civilization as if they were up in a balloon.

You pass by the back of the row of tents: that is, you keep to the bed of the stream, the precipitous bank on your right and the tents on your left. The tramping of

men and horses is heard by the dogs : these come out barking, and threatening hostilities. The women and children follow. This must be an exciting occasion : when did they see travellers pass this way ? They are still standing gazing after you when you take a last look round before committing yourself to the dreary glen that here opens a long vista towards the south.

Half-way up this lone ravine, the guide—for it has long been evident that Joseph is not acquainted with the district, and that the expedition is entirely in the hands of the dark-skinned, pink-and-white-frosted individual who gave the signal for the start when pacing the mound in Gihon—begins to scan the lofty precipices, first on one side, then on the other, as if expecting to find something. Raising his voice, he makes the silent glen sides re-echo the shout. Immediately an answer comes from the clefts of the rocks up near the heavens. It takes you some little time to descry the figure of a man, so small does he look, and so like the rocks and withered tufts in the colour of his garments. You learn that he is coming down to guide you to the cave—for not even does Pink-stripe know the way, for certain. The Bedouin has bid you go forward a little, and meet him at a point where there is a gorge breaking off to the right : there he will come down : there also begins the footpath leading up to the cave.

By the time you have reached the appointed spot, the peasant has got down, and awaits you. With him are four others, all wild-looking men. It is arranged that one of the five shall take care of the horses, while the other four, along with yourselves, ascend to the cave. It is a tough pull up : the path is uncomfortably steep, and the height of the valley-side tremendous. After long toiling, the leading Bedouin clambers up some fallen rocks, and sitting down prepares to lend a hand to each of his followers in turn. You are pulled on to the sloping block, and while lying on it you take the opportunity of looking

over the edge, just to see what like the look-down is: it is sheer, and fearful: glad are you to crawl in through the hole, and get away from the brink, for your head swims.

The rock entrance to the cave is only sufficiently large to admit of one at a time, and that crawling: you would never suspect, from the aspect of the exterior, that there was such a space within. Once in, you get standing erect. Now begin the preparations for exploring the interior. Joseph produces some half-dozen candles, and a considerable roll of small rope. Striking a light, and distributing the tapers, he next delivers up the rope to the Bedouins. One of these, a fine muscular young fellow, is entrusted with the loose end of it, while the oldest man of them takes the coil in his hand. You all advance till you reach the farthest point from which daylight through the entrance hole can be seen. At this point the young fellow who holds the end of the rope sits down: he is to hold the rope, and by no means let go, while the old man goes forward into the far recesses. It is a wonderful place: lofty and vaulted, with great pillars of rock here and there, you are at a loss whether to regard it as a work of nature or a feat of human industry.

The floor is uneven, sloping deeply towards the back: you move cautiously, holding the candle well in advance, and looking to your goings, not sure but that the next step may precipitate you into a bottomless pit. On second thoughts, you deem it wiser to keep closer to the old Bedouin, and not go off, as you have been doing, on your own account.

Extensive as these halls are, and well able to accommodate four hundred men—the number David had with him—there is a second arrangement of them: crawling down by a horizontal slit on the left or south side, you are surprised to find that hitherto you have seen but half.

The whole place is clean, and perfectly empty: no

creeping thing seems ever to enter it; and there is no water or vegetation in any part of it. It is as well swept as if the hermits had quitted it but yesterday.

On your return to the spot where you left the young Bedouin, you begin to think your task well over; for it has not been altogether pleasant work: the heat is oppressive, and the stooping to go through those endless passages, let alone the harassing dread of any accident to the rope, has been very tiring. The young fellow, glad apparently to be relieved from his post, begins to jump about in a frantic sort of manner: this, however, he does by way of letting you hear how hollow the ground, or rather rock, sounds underfoot.

Once more out in the open-air, the Bedouins watch that you do not fall over the cliffs in your descent to the path. This time they lead you by another route, not down but over the top of the glen-side: you are to descend to the horses by an easier path than the one you went up by. Over the top, you come upon a very small village. On a hill, a couple of miles to the south-west, lie the ruins of Tekoa, the home of Amos. Your Bedouin friends are such as the herdsmen of Tekoa must have been in the olden time, of whom the prophet was one.

Standing here, just over the cave, you cannot help thinking what a journey it is to the top of the opposite side of the glen: looking over, it is quite near—you could easily hold a conversation across the chasm; but to go down the one side and up the other is suggestive of half a day's journey. Behind you, away over by Tekoa, the country seems an impassable wilderness: Second Chronicles well names it "The Wilderness of Tekoa."

Joseph hands a few coppers to the old man—only coppers—and, saying "farewell," you begin the deep descent. The path zig-zags down the shoulder of the hill where the cross-valley comes in. Arriving at the foot, you make preparations for climbing the opposite side.

Here, happily, the glen-side is rounded—unlike the adjoining parts, whose cliffs overhang, lying in great brown shelving layers : well strewn with boulders, and certainly steep enough, it is yet not altogether impassable. The Bedouin who has been minding the horses is good enough to volunteer to accompany you a part of the way. You climb this hill on foot, of course : riding would be impossible : the horses' saddles are coming over their tails by the time you have got half-way up. Striped-frock, resolved to have some good of his beast, is holding on to its tail. This is a method of being taken in tow which you do not venture to imitate : visions of a hind-leg flying out, and catching you unawares, the result being an ignominious descent, heels over head, among the boulders, are sufficient to reconcile you to your toilsome lot.

Attaining the top, your heart sinks at the sight of the endless succession of ranges of hills that fills the space between you and the horizon.

Up hill and down dale for a space of about two miles north-eastward, and you climb the shoulder of the famous Frank Mountain. Curiosity dispels fatigue, for the time being : you are further refreshed by the announcement that a well of water is nigh, and that a halt will now be made for lunch.

The Frank Mountain is a most prominent object, being distinctly visible from great distances on all sides, towering above the mountains among which it stands. You would say it was artificial : it is as though the finest mountain in the neighbourhood had been selected, and then had a mound piled on the top of it. Its summit is flat, and of considerable extent, being about a hundred yards in diameter. Here stood the castle of Herodium founded by Herod the Great. Only the foundations remain. Here Herod is buried. Josephus states that a flight of marble steps, two hundred in number, ascended to the castle. Below lay the town of Herodia, of which some remains

are yet to be seen, on the north base of the mountain, towards the west.

At the foot of the north base you halt for lunch. There is a good deal of vegetation about; and the horses are delighted to be turned adrift to graze. As for yourself, the stretching of your limbs on the ground is more than grateful. The Bedouin is still here: he will share your lunch; and he well deserves it, for he has come a long way with you, and he will have a weary trudge back. You fancy, however, those natives cannot look upon the long rough distances with the same aversion as you do: they are accustomed to this way of life. At all events, you feel very certain that were you in the Bedouin's place, you would not voluntarily torture yourself with such a wander beneath a burning sun.

Joseph and the Bedouin have gone in search of the well: it is said to lie on a hill-side to the north-east. You are meanwhile consoling yourself with the promise of a drink, for your thirst is dreadful. It seems a marvel to you that the couple have the courage to climb the hill, knowing that they have to come back again: for your own part you would almost lie here and die of thirst rather than go so far for water. They return, empty-handed: no well can be found. Striped-frock, however, who has been on the prowl in the hollow, has discovered some rocks, whose indented surfaces contain rain-water. This is already tinged with green, from exposure to the sun, and in very tiny quantities: to drink it you would have to touch the rock with your lips, and gently suck in, which does not suit you: you must be content with a parched tongue for a few more hours.

The hills and dales have again to be faced, this time over a much larger stretch of ground: your next stop will be at the monastery, Mar Saba. This is a route seldom travelled: few strangers have done it: the guide books even are silent on it, the reason of this being that any

one wishing to visit Mar Saba would naturally do so from Jerusalem or Jericho. The journey you are doing to day is considered too much for one day : the Jerusalem guides told you it could not be done.

For the next five hours, then, you are to toil across this mountainous wilderness. The Bedouin has gone back, but not before he has given Striped-frock minute instructions as to the way. Pulling yourself together under the reviving influence of an orange, you take the hill like a native. There is no talking : every man is coming along as best he can, taking in the narrow prospect with eyes and mouth, and wondering what like the vision will be when the next sky-high ridge has been crossed.

Up there, to the left or west, sits a solitary man, gun in hand. The hill rises behind him ; and as you pass in front, a little way below, you half expect to see the fire flash from the muzzle of the long single-barrel. Questioned as to the way, he replies civilly, coolly keeping his seat. This is the place to come to if a man wants an outdoor existence : plenty of time for reflection too, if the mind can get on without the stimulus of so much as a weekly newspaper.

A few miles farther on, and you come upon two or three tents, the owners lying in front. These men are apparently startled to see travellers here. They are civil, nevertheless, and gather round you, willingly giving advice as to the way. There is some division among them as to the best route ; but on the whole it is agreed that you had better take such and such turns at such and such points. This settled, you again depart, passing down the hill, right across a small patch of green corn. You are scandalized at the brutality of treading down the good men's scanty crops, under their very eyes, and you make for the edge ; but Striped-frock evidently knows what he is doing : whether by way of bravado, or simply wishing to show that he is accustomed to the ways

of such peasants, who themselves would cross in this manner, he undoubtedly has a meaning for the seemingly wanton action. And he has calculated rightly, for they offer no remonstrance.

Still forward, and far on in a secluded hollow you suddenly come upon a solitary hut. In front of it stands a dreadful creature, an old man, clad in a soiled white frock, with some sort of girdle twisted round his waist. In the girdle are stuck two large pistols, bright as if from constant use. This man stands mute and motionless as you approach. You shudder at the bare thought of being here alone ; but, one of four, you are quite bold. He is evidently a man of few words, and disinclined to be troubled ; for, when questioned as to the route, he merely indicates with a lazy wave of the hand, that it lies up the glen to the north.

Up this next ridge proves a stiff pull, but you are rewarded with a glorious view of the Dead Sea from the summit : it lies peacefully below, not very far off, to the east. The cliffs along its eastern shore are distinctly visible : the quietness of the scene gives them an air of solemnity.

Forced to turn westward, the range being too steep to be descended on the north, you come upon a long gradual slope downwards to the dry bed of a stream. All the way down this slope are broad patches of red anemones, at the cheering sight of which the beasts take fresh courage. It is now but a little way to Mar Saba : a few turns, and you ride down a glen, whose lower or eastern end is filled up with buildings. Knocking at a small iron door in the wall, you are answered by a man who looks down from a square tower at the north side of the door ; and in a few minutes you enter the precincts of the monastery. Never were you more glad to find a place of rest and refreshment.

This monastery is said to have been founded in the fifth

century by a certain St. Euthymius. Sabas was a pupil of his. The history of the place, as also of the man whose name it bears, is very vague. Sabas, it seems, died about 530, after having founded several monasteries, and distinguished himself—zealous man—as a stout opponent of the Monophysites, that is, the heretics who held that Christ had only one nature—the Divine. The place has been repeatedly plundered ; and in consequence it became necessary to fortify it. For the last half-century it has been in the hands of the Russians, who restored and enlarged it.

Of more interest to you at present than these somewhat isolated historical facts is the question of the material resources of the establishment. To say that you are thirsty would be to use a very inadequate expression : your tongue is like a piece of hard wood. You trot down the stair, then, without delay ; through a second doorway, and down another stair ; across a paved court ; up a stair on the south side, and so into the refectory or dining-room. This is a large, handsome hall, fitted with broad divans all round. Here you tumble down your aching bones, and eagerly watch for the return of the little monk who has gone to fetch some wine. Thankful would you be, beyond all words, could you have a glass of spring water ; but they have nothing but the stagnant tank stuff, the same as at Jerusalem ; and that you cannot drink. Nor does this decanter of wine look at all inviting : it utterly lacks sparkle, and bears the stamp of being amateur-made. This, in fact, it turns out to be : they make it here, from their own vineyards. Not that there are vineyards about : the monastery possesses lands elsewhere.

Unpalatable as the liquor is, you are fain to have a draught. All you can say about it, however, is that it is better than nothing at all : it wets the parched tongue, and gives partial relief. But your guides disdain such trashy

tipple: they have been here before, and know that the cellars can produce something more potent than drumly white wine: a liqueur of the nature of whisky is what they order up. Out of curiosity you wish to taste this spirit; but you at once regret you did not let it alone, for the peppermint sort of essence with which it is flavoured is peculiarly nauseous, and threatens to stick to you permanently. The monk does not exactly sell spirits, but he looks for a fair price, all the same.

The monastery lies at the mouth of a glen, just where that glen runs through the west side of a much larger glen. This latter is the Kidron valley, which here runs south, and is of immense depth—some six hundred feet. The mouth of the smaller valley, or, in other words, the open in the west side of the Kidron valley, is walled across with very strong stone-work, buttressed, to keep it from falling into the deep Kidron. Inside this wall, the smaller valley has been, so far, levelled up; and the land sides—north and south—as well as the upper reach of this small valley, have been protected with strong walls. The area of the place, therefore, is triangular, the apex pointing to the west, and the base lying against the west side of the Kidron valley. As might be supposed, terraces rise in succession on the north and south sides. As for the Kidron wall, it rises only to about the level of the paved court; and you look over it, down into the abyss.

In the centre of the paved court stands a richly decorated shrine, a dome-roofed, arbour-like little structure. This, the monk who guides you over the place is eager to have you take note, contains the empty tomb of St. Sabas. You think you can hardly be hearing rightly, when he says “empty tomb,” the man’s enthusiasm being quite out of keeping with such an idea: it is empty, however, the saint’s body, or bones, having been removed to Venice long ago.

From this shrine you turn and go a few paces towards

the north-west, and enter the rock-hewn church of St. Nicholas. This is a ghastly place : skulls in considerable numbers stare at you from behind gratings in the walls, the skulls of the inmates murdered by the Persians who sacked the monastery so long ago as about the year six hundred.

Another church, a much finer one, stands east of the shrine. This contains a number of pictures, after the manner of the Eastern Church. On the north side of this church are the quarters set apart for pilgrims. Here you wander up and down flights of steps, and along galleries, looking down upon lower galleries, and altogether gathering the impression of doing a civilian barracks overhanging a precipice, or, in view of the birds that come here to be fed, a lighthouse on some lonely rock.

Returning to the paved court, you pass to the south side as if going again to the dining-hall. You keep nearer to the buttressed wall, however, and ascend a stair which leads to the rock-hewn cells in the cliffs overhanging the Kidron. Here is the saint's grotto, a small low-roofed den ; and beyond it is a still smaller one called the lion's grotto. The absurd story runs that Sabas, on entering his grotto one day, found it tenanted by a lion. The saint betook himself to repeating his prayers as hard as he could ; but the lion, quite regardless of this pious proceeding, dragged him out twice. Nothing daunted, the saint came in again ; and at last a *modus vivendi*, or mutual arrangement, was arrived at, the lion undertaking to keep to his own corner. These dens are not inhabited now : they are show-rooms, and a good deal of attention has been bestowed upon them, in the way of decoration, by holy hands in the days of old. Were the ecclesiastical trappings cleared out of the larger one, it would make a model study : here, far from din and strife—were there a goodish community of cultured inmates in the monastery, and were the library still within these walls—a man might

spend a few years not altogether unprofitably. But, alas, the monks are clowns ; and the monastery is more fitted now for a lunatic asylum—there are, indeed, a few lunatics incarcerated here.

You need no letter of introduction, as formerly : it is enough that you present yourself at the iron door : the inmates are only too glad to receive visitors. You are shocked to hear angry words passing between Joseph and the monk who has been showing you over the place : the latter resents the too trifling remuneration offered for value received. You entreat Joseph, somewhat peremptorily, not to be shabby. Just as you are about to leave, an old man comes running out from behind the larger church, and lays down a sheaf of walking-sticks. These are in a variety of styles, and all of them the workmanship of the inmates ; and they are offered for sale. You select a substantial one to carry home as a gift for a cultured friend, who sometimes thinks of Mar Saba when he hears the well-known hymn that was written here, “ Art thou weary, art thou languid ? ”

Striped-frock is seeing about the horses : they are tied up outside, with nothing to eat or drink, and not even any bedding to lie upon. There are some small, open, unfurnished buildings, just without the west wall : in these the ladies of any party that comes here to stay the night must take up their abode.

You have no desire to pass the night at Mar Saba ; although, to tell the truth, you have seen none of the creeping things which, according to the guide books, are so plentiful here : on the contrary, the divans round the walls of the dining-hall—it is on these that you would sleep—seem perfectly clean. But the whole concern gives you a creepy feeling : you are glad enough to get out of it. Perhaps it has been the sight of the lunatic-looking old man with the sticks that has given the finishing touch to your creepiness. At all events, when the horses are

reported to be ready you too are ready ; and you climb the stairs, over the rock-hewn church containing the skulls, and so pass out by the iron door. Jerusalem will be your next stop ; and it will take you all your time to reach it before nightfall.

Your path winds, to the right, round by the north back of the monastery, and then skirts the edge of the dreadful Kidron valley. What a look down ! A parapet, however, built evidently when there was more stir about Mar Saba than now, affords a most necessary protection to man and beast. Soon the path descends into the bed of the valley. Striped-frock is giving indications of anxiety : you must now push on, for the day is far spent, and you have before you a ride of between three and four hours. Every bone in your body seems bruised and broken, and you would fain be permitted to sit quietly, and let the beast go at a walking pace. That may not be : the yell and the whack which announced the serious start by the lower pool of Gihon in the morning is now repeated ; and the cavalcade is off at a gallop.

There is not much to note here : the barren hills are all so like each other, and the rugged valleys offer so little variety. Your route lies along the valleys, of course, and chiefly along the Kidron. You leave the latter, however, for a time, after descending into the hollow. By and by you come upon it again, and keep to it for a long time. Here the riding is so rough and so fast that occasional halts have to be made in order to adjust the saddles, which will keep going over to one side or the other. You begin to long for an English saddle : the Arab substitute is but a piece of carpet strapped over the beast's back. This Oriental stirrup, too, is now giving trouble : it is quite unnecessarily large, being in fact but a substantial moveable door-scraper taken and suspended by a strap ; and the jostling of the horses, which in this haste cannot altogether be avoided, is tolerably certain to leave some-

body's leg aching, if not cut. Your only chance is to hasten on in front, what time the others are stopped for saddle readjustment.

This is a desolate route, only second, they tell you, to that between Jerusalem and Jericho: here, there are a few Bedouin encampments; there, there are none at all. This, too, is less stony underfoot: in this long stretch of the valley there are green borders, and soft edges, the dry pebbly bed lying a yard or two lower, and the undermined banks showing where the torrent has been. Your horse is resolved to keep close to the brink. You marvel that it escapes: again and again the underwashed ground which its hind hoofs have just left has cracked and fallen in. At one place it takes you all your time to avert a catastrophe. Your beast has been rushing frantically on, rejoicing in the lead; it is on the edge as usual, the path being broken half-way across by the crumbling of the bank below; a horse-length in front the riding space has gone altogether, a rocky point round which it had wound being left bare and sheer; you have but time to leap from his back, and haul him up the bank, when his hind heels are flying out over the cliff. Up till now you have believed a horse might be trusted to look where it was going, especially an Oriental, but your faith in equine foresight has sustained a rude shock—not to speak of your back and “poor nerves.” Over this promontory, the galloping is resumed and kept up till a point is reached where the valley bends towards the south: here you leave the Kidron, and take to the mountain on the north or right-hand side. On your way to the heights your route lies up the Milk Valley. The sun is now down: it is getting dark. You are startled out of the dreamy mood, which night and stillness have thrown over you, by the sudden appearance of a fox. The creature darts like a white arrow up the slope among the bushes. You hasten on: for the next hour or two it promises to be eerie enough. No more

galloping for a while : this is tough work. Up, still up, the path lying in a ditch-like cutting, through what in the dark looks somewhat like chalk. This passes along on the side of the hill. The horses must go in single file.

After a long time comes the descent : you are once more in the Kidron valley ; and the heights you have crossed leave on your mind the impression of a miniature mountain-pass. Now the moon comes out : it is full. You need it much : this rough and stony way would have been dangerous in the dark. As you advance up the valley the moonbeams grow richer and richer, till you are encompassed with a flood of white light. Tired of watching for pitfalls, you let the horse go as it likes : this light is so glorious you would hardly mind having a fall.

And those shadows cast by the olive and mulberry trees ! How sharply defined, and how black ! You want to watch the branches, however, lest your hat get knocked off. On, and on : the horses would fain gallop again : they scent home. Striped-frock has ridden to the right, and is now working up the middle of the broad stony bed. You keep the edge, though not without encountering difficulties. These are terraced gardens you are skirting, and you seem to be sometimes in the garden, sometimes outside, and again on the top of the broad low wall. You have met no one, all the way, and the end of the journey is consistent with its beginning and middle in this respect, not a soul being about. The glen bends grandly to the north, and, as if making a special effort, spreads back its mountain sides, thus widening the torrent bed, and proudly discloses Mount Zion to view. From your present position the mountains seem specially magnificent.

At the mouth of the glen, right in the middle, is Job's Well. There are some stone troughs around the well, which is a stone-built shaft of over a hundred feet in

depth, surmounted with a roofed building. This is a prominent feature in the landscape. To-night it looks weird and gloomy: you shudder to think of the times you have clambered up inside the building, and of the once you well-nigh tumbled into the depths. The wheel is broken; but the spirits of them that have been long dead, whose hands used to work it, are there, you feel, among the rafters, clinging like bats. This is the Well of En-rogel, mentioned in Joshua as on the boundary between Judah and Benjamin. In Kings, too, you read how Adonijah, when David his father was old, exalted himself, and would be king; and how he slew sheep and oxen by the stone of Zohemoth "which is beside En-rogel."

You are now out of the Kidron valley: the two that here run into it are the Valley of Jehoshaphat coming from the north—the Kidron under another name—and that of the Son of Hinnom from the west. Your route lies up the latter: it is up, in reality, for there is a considerable gradient all the way through the valley, till you emerge on the south-going road; after which it is but a short though steep climb to the Jaffa Gate.

The situation of Jerusalem viewed from Job's Well is most imposing: probably the clear moonlight, showing the outlines of Zion and the Temple hill, and at the same time investing their remoter parts with a measure of obscurity, has a tendency to magnify, but there can be no doubt this is a grand sight. This is the point from which the ponderousness of the mountain mass can best be realized: here the valley-bed is some two hundred feet lower than up at Gethsemane; and you are just sufficiently far back to command the view. There is a something awe-inspiring in the great gorge of Jehoshaphat which stretches northward, fading into indistinctness in the distance. On its east side lies the long line of Olivet, with its myriad tombs; on its west the steep garden slopes of Zion and Ophel, and, farther on, the more cliff-

like sides of Moriah surmounted by the wall of the Temple area, and the adjacent Muslim graves. These of course you cannot make out from this point, but the known fact of their being there, added to the further gloomy associations clustering about Gethsemane, probably accounts for the uneasiness you feel in your right shoulder as you left-wheel to go into the Valley of Hinnom.

The lights of Siloam you have now turned your back upon. Not that there are many lights visible in any of these Oriental places: the people go to bed when it gets dark: but a few stars shine there on the face of the hill. Never before did you see the village look so inaccessible, so rock-hewn-like, so stuck-on-like to the face of the cliffs.

And lo, on your left, as you enter the Hinnom defile, rises the rocky wall of the Potter's Field. The mountain, of which this is a portion of the base, is called, as has been said, the Hill of Evil Counsel, because on it stood Căiaphas's country house, where Judas agreed to the betrayal. It is a long, large hill, extending the whole length of the valley. Down at this corner, and for some distance up the valley, the rocky base is honeycombed with tombs. These are in two storeys, as it were, the one row lying above the other and in a slope of rock set a little back. To get to these tombs is in many cases no easy task, though some of them are approached by flights of steps. You have scrambled all over them, pausing now to admire the remains of some lovely hewn-work, now to look into a broken vault, now to wonder how you were to get past without tumbling down the face of the rocks. Hermits are said to have lived here. But before the days of hermits, they tell you, the lepers of the city made these tombs their home. And, singularly enough, you have seen a row of lepers seated beneath the cliffs: they may be in these tombs now. There is no time to

inquire at present, though no doubt Joseph knows where they are: one of them, that poor fellow, old acquaintance of his before the dread scourge was contracted, is much in his thoughts: never did you realize the sad case of those poor creatures till that afternoon down here when Joseph said, as you passed the sorry row, "I knew one of these men before he became a leper."

Up there, in the midst of the tombs, is the Building of the Field of Blood. It is a flat-roofed sunk vault of considerable dimensions, its lower part rock-walled. Above—for it is three or four storeys deep—the walls are of large blocks of stone; and massive stone pillars support the vaulted roof. You have stood by the broken-down east end, and looked into the depths. It is a repulsive place. Here they used to let down dead bodies through a hole in the roof. These would be the bodies of poor people or strangers. Might not this be the spot purchased with the thirty pieces of silver?

Clatter, clatter go the horses' hoofs as you ride up the stony path. It is narrow, fenced on either side with loose-stone walls of considerable height and thickness, and so rough that you could fancy the fences of old to have tumbled down and others to have been raised, the debris being allowed to remain as the footway.

You are now past the tombs: that road which crosses to the south side—your path is on the Zion side—marks their boundary. Were it daylight you could see the beauty of the south side: to-night it looks a gloomy, shadowy place; but in reality it is most beautiful: there is a grassy table-land on the top of the first layer of cliffs, and on and above this there are many trees which it is pleasant to stroll among in the sunshine. Over there, on the table-land, you saw the other day a large concourse of children out for a holiday. The glen rang with their merry voices—a contrast to the state of things which of old gave to this place its name of Valley of

the Children of Groaning; for that is the meaning of "Hinnom." Here children were sacrificed to Molech. Another name for it was Topheth, or Place of Fire. In Second Kings it is said, "King Josiah defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech." And in the days of our Lord this place—still called by the same name, Gehenna—was held in disdain: here the rubbish and filth of the city were thrown down, and great fires were kept burning, both to consume and to purify. This was what our Lord referred to when He spoke of Hell Fire: to be cast into hell meant originally to so go to wreck and ruin morally and spiritually as to be cast out like the filth and rubbish that found their destination in this loathed place.

Still up the stony way, curving slightly to the right or north, and by and by the main road is reached. Now your progress is easy: this is the Bethlehem road. The ascent is more steep, however, than in the valley: you are climbing the western side of Zion, diagonally; and in a very little while will reach the Jaffa Gate. The floor of the Valley of Gihon lies below on your left: it and Hinnom are really one; for it is the same glen that descending southward on the west side of Zion, turns eastward and bounds it on the south side. You dismount outside the gate. The hubbub is hushed, the only sounds coming from that corner-house with its back to the city wall, at your left hand as you turn to enter the gate: it is a Greek *café*, and the only place in Jerusalem where Western ways are—though distantly—mimicked. You have little sympathy with the clamouring youths: all you want now is rest.

CHAPTER IX.

BETHLEHEM.

JOSEPH the missionary—how many Josephs there are about here—was desirous that you should “worship with them,” as he expressed it, meaning with himself and his little flock, this being Sunday. Poor dear man! With his printing press, and his weekly gathering of the few who think with him, he does his best to publish and commend what he calls the simple Gospel of Christ. Whether his success is commensurate with his zeal and the merit of the cause is more than doubtful: Jerusalem is anything but a promising field. However, had you encountered him and his work in some more prosaic part of the world you would probably have worshipped with him—although preachers worship very indifferently except when in the pulpit—but here, in the holy city, and with so many spots of supremest interest all about, you felt, and told him so, that it was quite out of the question to expect you to leave the great work, so to speak, and serve tables at his suburban retreat. No: Bethlehem you had resolved should be the theatre of your worship on Sunday morning; and to Bethlehem you have now started to go.

Any day would do: you have been there on week-days: but there seems to be something peculiarly fitting in a quiet stroll out to the birthplace of our Lord—especially on a lovely morning—when one almost fancies one hears the echoes of the church bells which are then tolling all over England: the walk is like a journey to church.



BETHLEHEM.

Your friend and you have started early enough : it is only about nine o'clock : but lo, half-way out, you meet, already on his return from the place of the nativity, a Dutchman, an agreeable man, whose acquaintance you made on the voyage from the Adriatic to Egypt. He was a deck passenger, and one night had a dreadful time, for it rained and woke him up, and shelter he had none. This is your next meeting with him. His ambition is to see the world, and learn every language spoken under the sun : he has been in Central Africa, and can speak Wahili, the most widely spoken tongue in that continent. In all likelihood, you and he will meet no more.

After this refreshing chat you proceed, and by and by come in sight of Rachel's Tomb : with its cracked walls and little grey dome, it stands like a milestone on history's highway. The road is unfenced, and the tomb likewise. Stones are strewn all about—not so much on the road as by the margin of it, and over the adjoining fields, where an occasional olive tree has taken its stand, as much as to say, "Here I am : you shall not dislodge me, treat me ever so badly."

The path leading in to Bethlehem leaves the main road at Rachel's Tomb. It is a very poor path, but rendered pleasant to tread by reason of the trees and bushes and flowers about : this is like passing through an opening in a plantation. Some children are here at play ; and a pretty kid follows them, giving expression to its satisfaction with the world in general by occasionally tossing its heels in the air.

Just before entering Bethlehem, you turn to your left, among some cottages, to see again the well from which David longed for a drink. It is a draw-well, and covered with a wheel-like stone, the hole in the centre of which is uncommonly small—fortunately, for it is right in the roadway. Whether this is a spring or only a tank it is difficult to say : more probably the latter. In that case,

however, its water is but rain-water, and not likely to be held in especial esteem. It may be a spring. For one thing, if this is not David's Well, there seems to be no other about the place—at least that would answer to the description, which says it was by the gate. This is about where the north gate would be.

To ponder the matter, and look around, you step on to the roof of a newly built cottage by the roadside, and sit down. The back wall is towards the road, and no higher than an ordinary fence: the ground in front is deeper. Conversation on the roof reaches the ears of the inmates, who begin to come out and look up to see what is the matter. It certainly is taking a liberty to get on to a man's house-top. But the people soon satisfy themselves that no harm is meant, and retire within.

Seated on this perch, you gaze south across the valley upon Bethlehem, the eye dwelling especially on the vast confused conglomeration of lofty buildings at the east end. These cover and contain the cave wherein our Lord was born. A certain whiteness seems to add majesty to the general aspect of Bethlehem, which effect no doubt is heightened by the lie of the town, built as it is on a long ridge, and down the slopes as well. You were surprised at its appearance, the first time you saw it. The population numbers about five thousand, but the impression one gathers from a general view is that it is quite a large place. You wonder again and again at its whiteness: if grey Jerusalem might be spoken of as seeming to be of the afternoon, this might be called of the morning—appropriate to a birthplace.

David's men, from about Adullam, would come up the glen from the east, and giving the promontory—it had no Church of the Nativity on it then—a wide berth, would skulk round to this point, keeping well up the hill-side all the latter part of the way. The distance would not be extravagantly great, nor, owing to the lie of the ground, the risk very imminent.

Josephus gives a version of his own of the incident concerning this well. According to his account, it was while David was, not at Adullam, but in Jerusalem, that he desired to drink of the water of Bethlehem. The army of the Philistines had come to fight against Jerusalem: they lay in the valley to the south of the city—the valley or plain of Rephaim—and virtually blocked the way to Bethlehem. David had gone to the top of the citadel to inquire of God concerning the battle. And he said—still further indicating the prevalence of trouble—“We have excellent water in my own city, especially that which is in the pit near the gate,” wondering if any one would risk running the gauntlet of the Philistines. He added, so naively, “he would rather have a drink of that water than a great deal of money.” Three of his best men, on hearing the king speak thus, ran and burst through the enemy’s camp, and having drawn water from this well, returned again through the camp, the Philistines being so surprised at the boldness of the three that they did them no harm. But when the water was brought to the king he refused to drink of it, pouring it out to God instead, as a thankoffering for the men’s safety.

To the Christian mind the town of Bethlehem is essentially associated with all that is most tender and touching in human experience. The name by which it was originally known was Ephrath: in Genesis we read, “They journeyed from Bethel; and there was still some way to come to Ephrath. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath—the same is Bethlehem.” In the days of the prophet Micah it was known as Bethlehem Ephrathah. As to the signification of Bethlehem there is no doubt: the word means “house of bread.” As to Ephrathah, however, it is considered an open question whether it is to be regarded as signifying “fruitful,” or as having been merely adopted from the name of Caleb’s wife. Certainly, read as meaning

“fruitful house of bread,” it would seem to savour somewhat of tautology. The place may probably have been called “house of bread” by reason of the surrounding fertility—a fertility all the more marked as there is so much wilderness about. That the country a little outside this fertile spot was disparaged of old is manifest from the words recorded in First Samuel, “Eliab, David’s eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why art thou come down? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the *wilderness*?”

It was from Bethlehem that Elimelech and Naomi his wife, with their two sons, went forth to go to the land of Moab, driven thereto by a famine. It was to Bethlehem the two widows, Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth, turned their steps a few years later. And then we have the picture of the reapers and the gleaners in the harvest field over there, and Boaz the sturdy peasant-proprietor threshing his corn with his own hand, and lying down in the barn to sleep at night by the corn heap. And Bethlehem was the birthplace of David, great-grandson of Boaz.

That the people of Bethlehem had flocks and herds, and were in a prosperous condition, appears from several passages: “Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.” And again, “Jesse said unto David, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these two loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to thy brethren; and bring these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand.” These passages bring before the mind a scene of peace and plenty.

Later, in more warlike times, Rehoboam, we are told, built cities for defence in Judah. Among these the name of Bethlehem stands first. And, in sadder times, after Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion, as we learn from Jeremiah,

the Khan of Chimham, here, was a temporary resting-place for the remnant of the people under Johanan on their way to Egypt. The next mention of that Khan is in the New Testament, "There was no room in the inn."

That field in the flat immediately east of and below the Church of the Nativity is a pleasant spot to look upon: it is a rare sight in these parts to see anything at all like a field, so hilly is the country all about, so stony, and so wrinkled with ravines. That field is an exception, and a striking exception. No wonder they call it the Field of Boaz, for where else could Boaz's field be? They make it, too, the scene of the vision that appeared to the shepherds. This likewise is natural enough, for the cave which lodged the Holy Family was close by, just on the edge of the heights a little way to the west.

Pondering these thoughts, you rise and make for the town: it is at hand. Down into the hollow, you skirt the base of the concave declivity, keeping to the main street. The houses are of two storeys, and in some places are built over the street, the road seeming to pass through a tunnel. The street rises gradually, till the summit of the longitudinal ridge is attained. This ridge runs east and west, the Church of the Nativity, as already stated, occupying its eastern extremity. A concave declivity on the south side corresponds to this one on the north, but it lies a little farther west, and the town does not extend to it.

The summit of the long ridge is flat and broad, and they make it the market-place. This morning there is quite a throng of peasants and Bedouins, many of the latter from the wilderness towards the Dead Sea. They are dealing in country produce of various kinds, as also goats and donkeys. Just beyond the market-place, and parted from it by no fence whatever, is the cemetery; beyond this the church. The ground sloping to the north,

below the market-place and the cemetery, is laid out in long shelving terraces with shallow rocky fronts: the general effect is suggestive of a series of minor cascades. The terraces are planted, some with vines, some with olive trees.

On your right hand, facing the market-place, is a row of small shops. These display great quantities of beads, Dead-Sea-stone work, and especially mother-of-pearl articles. The cutting of mother-of-pearl is a staple industry of Bethlehem: brooches, crucifixes, and large shells embellished with pictures, in relief, of the Nativity, are to be had here in great variety and perfection. Some of these mother-of-pearl shells are of enormous size.

As usual, two or three young men from the shops have followed you into the church. These lads are in the habit of watching for strangers—who are sure to pass this way going to the church—and making up to them at about the church door, accompany them through the building. Most people are well enough pleased to have the points of interest indicated to them, and would gladly remunerate the self-appointed guides; but remuneration in that shape is not what these Bethlehem youths desire. In the course of the peregrination they manage to get you to assent to the proposal that you should visit their shop later on; and they hold you to it.

The Church of the Nativity, like that of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, is apportioned among the sects—beg pardon! In Jerusalem four bodies possess chapels—Greeks, Latins, Armenians, Copts: here, only the first three of these are represented. And it is not so very long since the Latins had yet no place among them. France, however, got them admitted; and since their admission they have not been slack in taking advantage—quite right—of any opportunity that came in their way to establish themselves on a broader basis. The result is, they have now the best of it. The Greeks, indeed, have not been

ousted from the choir, the most desirable portion of the church—and the most precious portion, inasmuch as it is right over the crypt of the Nativity—but the Latins have practically the run of the whole place, for they possess a right of way through the other chapels to the crypt.

To understand the Church of the Nativity, one must think of it as erected over a cave, whose entrance, now built up, used to be in the face of the declivity which shelves down into the flat immediately to the east. In order to get at this cave from the church above, the roof of the former has been pierced in two places, and small stairs erected. The cave, as might be expected, would be dark but for the numerous lamps kept burning. It is, indeed, almost dark, despite these. It takes a little time, at any rate, before one's eyes get accustomed to the dimness, after descending from the well-lighted church above.

On reaching the bottom of the winding stair, and groping your way forward, you will probably be brought to a sudden stand by stumbling against an armed soldier. It is rather alarming, on putting out your hand to feel what the nature of the obstruction is, to grasp the cold barrel of a gun. Your first thought is, will you be bayoneted on the spot for assaulting the guard? The soldier, however, has probably learned by this time to make allowance, in the circumstances; for he lets you alone: he stands motionless, a couple of paces off the sacred spot. This man's duty is to stand here and preserve the peace among the sects: he has to see that they do not molest one another, access to the altar being free to all of them alike.

A silver star, set in the pavement, marks the place of the Nativity. This star is moulded after the Greek fashion, and was fixed here long before the Latins arrived. Naturally, as the latter established themselves and gathered place and power, this Greek mark—all along hateful—grew intolerable: the situation was a repetition of the

case of Haman and Mordecai. At length the Latins fairly gave way under the pressure of irritation, and, attacking the hated thing, tore it up. This was the cause of the Crimean war—Russia backing the Greeks, and France the Latins. Eventually, the identical star was put again in its place, the Sultan proclaiming, by way of satisfying all parties, that it was neither a Greek nor a Latin star, but his star. Such, at least, are the facts as you received them from the Greek priest in the Monastery of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem; and no doubt they are correct.

From the cave or crypt of the Nativity a narrow passage cut in the rock conducts to an underground cell in which Jerome studied. As you pass along in the darkness, you are stopped at a point and informed that here, in the side of the passage, is his grave. Were it not that age has robbed the tomb of its terrors—Jerome died in the year 420—it would be gruesome work coming thus closely into contact with the departed scholar: probably his body has long ago crumbled to dust. Nevertheless, it is not at all to your liking to go groping in such a place as this: you cannot help comparing yourself to a mole: the only point wanted to make the comparison complete would be that you scrape and make a passage as you go along.

It is with a feeling of real relief that you at length mount a narrow stair and thus ascend to daylight. This stair lands you at the door of the Latins' chapel, on the north side of the church: it is apparently a recently constructed passage, made for the convenience of the Latins: to have expected them to go round so far in order to reach what was in reality so near, would have been unreasonable. Here, then, by this narrow stair, the priests of the Latin chapel can not only go direct to Jerome's grave, but may continue their journey on to the altar of the Nativity.

The Armenian chapel lies between that of the Latins and the choir of the original church—the chapel of the

Greeks—from which the stairs descend. In order to reach the crypt of the Nativity, the Latins have thus to pass through the Armenian chapel. The door by which they enter this chapel is at the north-west corner, while the one they pass out by is at the south-east corner. They thus have the right to go in a slanting direction across the Armenian chapel—it being conceded that they may take the shortest way through. The Armenians have a carpet on their floor, but this has had to be cut: it now lies in the shape of a triangle, in order to let the Latins pass on their way without having to tread on it.

The several monasteries clustered about the Church of the Nativity present the appearance of a vast fortress. It would be impossible, viewing the conglomeration from without, to surmise the character of its interior. This is the portion of the town that stands out most prominently: not only is it built on the clear extremity of the ridge, where, by reason of the declivities below it, north, south, and east, it is well exposed to view, but its buildings far surpass in magnitude those of the other parts.

To-day you rest: the shops have had visits from you before, and may have again; but not to-day: you believe in the day of rest: if these people do not wish to rest from selling, you at least wish to rest from buying. It is hard, however, to persuade these lads that you really mean it: they would have you just look in: you might have coffee, if you cared: no need to buy.

Strolling westward through the town, your attention is attracted by sounds issuing from a house which from its appearance might be a school. Entering, you find the place full of young people: there has been a marriage; and these are met to celebrate the occasion. None but females are present. And the form of amusement consists of a sort of waltz, the two girls engaged in it whirling round and round, but never moving away from the same spot. The surrounding crowd supply the necessary

music by singing a lively song. When one couple are exhausted, another take the floor. Several old women act as mistresses of ceremonies. The whole scene is most picturesque, the brilliant colours of the dresses intermingling as if on purpose to produce a spectacle.

In Ecclesiastes it is said, "I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared." The Pools of Solomon are only a couple of miles beyond Bethlehem, to the south. It is quite an easy walk direct to them from Jerusalem—under seven miles. The first time you visited the pools you were very much surprised to find them in that locality: whether from careless reading on your part, or imperfect description on the part of some writers, you certainly had the impression that the pools lay near to Hebron. Hebron, however, is thirteen miles south of them.

These pools are three in number, and rectangular, each resembling a dock. They lie in a valley, and stretch lengthwise down it in succession, the upper overflowing into the next below. From the lowest of the three a conduit, built just level with the ground—that is, sunk its own depth in the ground—and about two feet square, conveys a full stream to Bethlehem. This aqueduct originally only passed Bethlehem, its destination being the Temple ground at Jerusalem. It can still be traced all the way to the holy city; but what with the falling in of the upper stones at some places, and the practical cutting off of the supply by letting it dissipate itself at Bethlehem, the aqueduct conveys no water beyond that town.

You traced it one day from the pools to Bethlehem. Your American comrade could barely hide his contempt for the poverty of the engineering ability displayed in the making of the pools. Not that in themselves these are despicable, by any means: reservoirs of from a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards long, and from half to third that in width, cut out of the solid rock to a depth, at parts,

of some fifty feet, with stairs, and the whole of the built portions carefully cemented—a work of such dimensions cannot be called despicable. But Jonathan saw how the entire valley might have been formed into a lake, one monster dam having been run across at a narrow part.

As you pass down from the lowest or easternmost pool, the round hill of Etam rises on the right. It is a stony hill, but bushy and green withal; and on its summit lie the ruins of the town where Samson established himself—the rock Etam. A little way forward, you begin to skirt the north side of the glen. The floor below is beautifully green—the result of the overflow of water from the pools. Farther on, you pass by the top of a village which seems literally perpendicularly fastened to the side of the glen. The aqueduct is uncovered at intervals, a stone having been removed to let the herdsmen draw water. The villagers come up here to draw. A boy was hanging about the opening of the aqueduct. Jonathan, who had just peeled an orange, handed to the little fellow a half of it. As if unable for an instant to take in the situation, the Arab mechanically received the proffered gift; but gathering his faculties together, and realizing through a great and overwhelming surprise that a gratuitous kindness had been done him, he silently but swiftly made a dive at Jonathan's hand, and kissed it. These people are very susceptible of being touched through kindness. You recall another instance: it was in the hotel at Jerusalem. You met on the stairs a shopkeeper. He had come to offer some goods to one of the inmates—who had selected them, and then declined to buy unless ever so much were deducted from the sum total. The poor fellow simply asked if you could show him the man's room. You at once retraced your steps and led him to the proper door. For this he seized your hand and kissed it, a tear starting to his eye.

Beyond the steep village the aqueduct leaves the valley

edge, and strikes more northward, direct for Bethlehem. In order to reach the town, it has to make a detour westward : the wonder is they had not thought of carrying it right across : the width of the intervening valley is really trifling. To avoid the long roundabout, you descended into the bottom. This is laid out in small gardens. Across these, you arrived at a steep bank which it seemed hardly possible to climb : some Bethlehemites standing above said it was useless to attempt it. It turned out quite practicable, however ; and so you stood in the outskirts of the town at once. You could not help contrasting the dryness of these gardens with the rich green of the valley below the steep village : there the gardens were remarkably luxuriant, from the constant overflow of the pools. But you could see the greenness dying away at length, and the curious spectacle of the dry and thirsty land drinking up quite a stream. That green stretch in the valley they call Solomon's Gardens.

It would be easy to water these Bethlehem gardens by tapping the aqueduct : it skirts the upper or west end and the whole north side of them. But the place is as dry as dust.

You were interested to see what sort of arrangement the people of Bethlehem had made at the end of the aqueduct. Following it, you came to a rather squalid part of the town, just on the edge, above the gardens. Here the aqueduct pours its waters into a deep stone-built square tank. The neighbourhood of this tank is a rendezvous for washerwomen. Alongside are extensive rubbish heaps—apparently the gatherings of the town.

One comes again upon the aqueduct, in the valley of Gihon, just as one approaches Jerusalem. Across the valley stretches a dam, which forms on its north side the lower Pool of Gihon—now dry. The dam serves the purpose of a bridge ; but it was probably originally constructed with the view of carrying the aqueduct over. At

all events the aqueduct is carried over it to Zion. Rounding the south slopes of Zion, it makes its way to the Temple ground. But the curious thing is, that after walking over to Moriah again and again you cannot convince yourself but that the aqueduct must rise very considerably before it could get to the level of the Temple ground. It is only after you have reflected upon the great descent one makes in going through the city from the Jaffa Gate down to the Temple, and comparing it with the descent by the Bethlehem road from the same gate down to the mound or dam in Gihon, that you can get reconciled to the fact that Moriah is so much lower than Zion.

And as for the Valley of Jehoshaphat, its floor lies ever so much lower than that of Gihon: so much so, that Gihon, no mean valley either, becomes in comparison an upland glen. Both from north and west, the descent to the meeting point of Jehoshaphat and Hinnom at Job's Well is apallingly deep and rapid.

CHAPTER X.

DOWN TO JERICO.

IT is a lovely morning : the sun shines brightly, and it is going to be a hot day, although the summer is yet a good way off. You are glad, because this forenoon you start on a three days' expedition to the Jordan and the Dead Sea. The landlord of the little hotel at Jericho, when in Jerusalem a day or two ago, was kind enough to instruct you how to set about your journey : with his usual kindness, he went the length of agreeing to have everything arranged for you, so that on the day appointed you might have no further trouble than merely to present yourself at the unpretending store in the under flat of your hotel—the only hotel in Jerusalem, within the walls—when you would find men and donkeys prepared for the journey. This store is kept by relatives of the said landlord ; and here the goods required at the hotel at Jericho are placed on donkey-back, and sent on their way. It so happens that to-day two donkey loads are to be conveyed down to Jericho. You say “down,” as the Bible also says in the parable, because the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho is literally a descent. Jerusalem stands on the mountains, high above the level of the Mediterranean Sea, and a very great deal higher than the Jordan valley. The two donkeys have been sent on before, and you are expected to overtake them somewhere on the other side of Bethany.

Waiting for the appointed hour—it yet wants a little of

eleven, the time agreed upon for starting—you amuse yourself by looking over the stock of the store. Here are drapery goods—not exactly laid out for inspection, however, as in the shop-windows of your own country, and certainly not exposed as “the latest fashions.” There is no room for that, nor indeed is there ever any change of fashions in these parts. The women wear what might be described as a dark blue cotton bathing-gown, tied with a string round the waist; and, by way of jacket, a red and black vertically-striped garment, perfectly straight down all round, reaching slightly farther down than jackets usually do, and having but half sleeves. The head-dress is a little shawl thrown over head and shoulders: it suggests Ezekiel’s reference to “kerchiefs for the head.” At the store, however, can be purchased materials out of which those garments are made; or you may buy the articles ready-made. Here, too, come Europeans to buy ribbons and gloves, and even silks; and, if the ladies of your party require riding-habits, they may have them made here. Saddlery, too, is sold here, as well as travelling-bags, waterproofs, and, in general, whatever is requisite for the tourist. The place suggests those wonderful medleys of merchandise you encounter in country stores at home, where saddlery mingles with drapery and grocery goods, and the post-office completes the mixture.

And it would be a good thing were the proprietors of this store the keepers of the post-office in Jerusalem. The city boasts two post-offices: the one is the Ottoman, and the other the Austrian. The Ottoman is only a few doors beyond the hotel, on the left-hand side of the narrow street or lane that dives away down by causewayed steps, each a fathom long, into the heart of the city. This street Europeans call David Street, or Jaffa Street; but the natives know nothing of those names, any more than of the so-called Christian Street, which goes off this, a hundred yards down, to the left or north, and leads past

the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This calling of streets by different names on the part of the Western and the Oriental is typical of the vast gulf there is between the ways and thoughts of the one and the ways and thoughts of the other. You do not need to be long in the East to get to know that the Oriental lives in a world of his own, and that, as for you, you are so much of an outsider in his eyes that he hardly deigns to look at you. The Ottoman post-office is not a pretentious institution. Entering a dark narrow passage, you proceed to the back, where is a small space open to the sky. In a corner lies a quantity of rubbish, waiting to be taken away. In a wire-fronted case suspended on the wall are many letters that want owners; for there is no delivery of letters in Jerusalem. Many of the addresses are very curious. Some merely give the name, and "Holy Land"; others have been forwarded from such towns as Nazareth or Tiberias, where they have failed first of all to find claimants; and others are garnished with what reflections have seemed to the sender appropriate to missives bound for such a holy destination. You wonder whether the contents are really of importance to anybody, or whether there may not be, again, hearts sick through hope deferred—the patients possibly not far off in some little back court, going from time to time to ask for a letter, but unable to claim their own, because of its faulty address; or, perhaps more sad, the sender looking for a reply, while the intended recipient does not think of calling to see whether there is any letter for him. As for the Austrian post-office, it is in a little back lane, somewhat farther south in the city, on Zion, and is much the same in character as the other. These offices are only open at stray times—say, when a mail comes or goes.

But, to return to the store. Immediately outside the door, and indeed all along the front of the house, are seated persons of various nationalities and of both sexes,

vending goods of some sort or other. You become aware, as you stand at the door, that there is a black woman seated on the ground at your feet. She is mildly trying to engage your attention. A few tiny parcels lie in front of her: these are the things she works with in pursuit of her calling: she is a fortune-teller. In good spirits over the fine day for your journey, you give her a coin; and the store-people and yourselves—for there are two of you going on the journey—gather with your heads together to hear what the Nubian has got to say. It is the usual thing: you are to be rich, to marry a lovely lady, and to be happy.

But here are the donkeys. The owner himself has brought them, and he is to accompany you. A very smart fellow he looks: not tall, and not stout, but well-built, as you can see in spite of his petticoats—for he is dressed, to all appearance, in woman's clothes, having a petticoat and a gown, with a band wrapped round the waist. His gown is striped, a faded pink-and-black. On his head he wears the customary turban. A moustache, black as ink, is all the hair about his face; and his dark eye, you perceive, could readily become terrible. In the company of such a man you are not afraid to undertake the journey, even though quite aware that you may fall among thieves. When this arrangement was first proposed, you had some misgivings: one and another of the numerous guides that hang about in front of the hotel had given you to understand that there was only one way of accomplishing the journey to the Jordan, and that was by paying the statutory tribute-money to the Sheik of Abu Dis, a small village lying about a mile to the south-east of Bethany, and corresponding probably to the ancient Bethphage. This man has the privilege of exacting some sixteen shillings from each traveller who goes down to Jericho: that is to say, you can set his authority at nought, and go down without having anything to do with

him ; but it is quite true, all the same, that should anything befall you by the way, you need look for no redress : the police would not stir a finger to find your assailants unless you had at the outset constituted yourself a client of this sheik. As a matter of fact most travellers put themselves under his protection, and it is perhaps wise to do so. He will send a man, possibly his own son, along with you ; and your sense of self-importance will be greatly augmented by seeing in your party, or by your side, the son of a sheik, arrayed in gorgeous apparel, and armed with sword and revolver. Compared with your own quiet way of doing the journey, you hardly know whether to be startled or amused on being told afterwards by a go-ahead American that, when he went down, he was one of a company of some hundred and twenty—two-thirds of these, of course, being attendants of one kind or another, as the party carried tents. However, not caring to do things in such and such a way merely because other people do them so, and perhaps scarcely aware of the dangers that might be encountered on that particular journey—perhaps, if the truth were all told, not averse to facing obstacles, but rather relishing the thought of running risks—you prefer to go unguarded.

Well acquainted with the streets and lanes of Jerusalem, you instinctively move as if to go down the narrow thoroughfare that leads eastward into the heart of the city—Jaffa Street—for is not the Stephen Gate the proper gate by which to go out, if one's destination lies in the direction of the Mount of Olives ? But the donkeys' heads are towards the Jaffa Gate, the opposite direction. You express surprise at such a manifestly roundabout route being preferred, and are immediately informed that, though decidedly roundabout, passing at once outside the walls, and making a detour by the north side of the city, would be more expeditious than pushing through the crowded lanes. Besides, you half gather—though it is

sometimes difficult to get at the precise meaning of an Oriental's statement—that journeying through the city on donkey-back is prohibited. Certainly, all these weeks that you have been wandering at random everywhere about the place, you cannot recollect ever having seen anybody riding within the walls, except, indeed, at the spot where your donkeys are now drawn up: this is the starting point for all expeditions: here, undoubtedly, it is allowable to mount either horse or donkey; and it is often done, though many prefer having the beasts led outside the gate before mounting. On the morning of any considerable expedition, if you step out on to the balcony or iron-railing-faced platform that runs along the whole front of the hotel, you will see an array of horses, saddled and ready, drawn up on the left or east side of the little square, hard by the gate that leads, behind, to the English chapel and school. The south side of this open space is formed by the barracks; its west by the citadel, including the well-known large square tower called the tower of Hippicus, or tower of David, and spoken of in the Song of Solomon; and its north side by the hotel, or, rather, by the street that runs past in front of the hotel. A moat surrounds this tower; and a stone wall, low enough to be looked over, runs along by the side of the square, and also along on the left side of the street as you proceed outwards towards the Jaffa Gate, which, in fact, adjoins the tower on the north side.

It is a lucky thing for you that the regiment does not emerge from the barracks at the moment of your starting; the band, blazing away with brass instruments, but playing very little of a tune, would swoop down, and crowd you and your donkeys into very small compass. As it is, the stream of the people passing to and fro, hemmed in on the one side by the fruit and vegetable sellers squatted by the moat wall, and on the other by those dotted on the ground in front of the hotel, makes it hard enough work to keep

yourselves stationary ; and you are glad when a start is actually made.

Wishing not to give your beasts more to do than is necessary, and probably disliking being stared at, you follow them on foot. A hundred yards or less and you are at the gate. This, like other gates of the city, is a roofed square porch : entering it straightforward, your exit is by the right. The soldier on guard takes no notice of you ; nor does that lame beggar with the crutch come limping alongside of you, pouring his entreaties into your ear, as he used to do ; for you have made a bargain with him, that, on receipt of so much down, and the promise of so much more before your final departure from the holy city, he would molest you no more. Outside, the road leads northwards in front of a row of two-storey buildings that here line the outside of the city wall, most of them being shops and *cafés* ; on the other side of this road there is a long row of one-storey buildings, *cafés* again, saddlers' booths, stables, and, higher up, dwelling-houses. The road going off to the left from the gate descends on the Jerusalem side of the Valley of Gihon, and is, as already stated, the highway to Bethlehem and Hebron. At the point where this road breaks off from the open space outside the gate, you will almost invariably find about a dozen lepers, of both sexes, seated in a row, calling piteously, and holding out their hands, or what remains to them of hands, begging—a sad and sickening sight. To-day you do not pass immediately in front of these : they are on the right-hand side of the Bethlehem road : and behind them is that raised piece of ground where you see camels and donkeys congregated—a place of loading and disloading. A couple of hundred yards farther on your way you reach the corner of the walls. You then descend by the back of the city, leaving on your left a suburb consisting of the Russian pilgrim colony, a couple of hotels, and some private houses, not to mention an Arabic

Protestant chapel. The road is bad, nothing else than a continuous rubbish depôt, on the edge of which you pick your steps with difficulty. Soon the Damascus gate is reached and passed. Here the road ascends slightly, continuing to do so all the way to the north-east angle of the wall. All along by the wall are mounds of earth, and, as you near this corner of it, there is a deep artificial ravine or moat between it and the road.

Descending into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, your path leads slantingly southwards among numberless graves; past the spot where they say Stephen was stoned, and where the perpendicular path from the Stephen Gate comes down; by the one-arched bridge across the Kidron—dry—leaving on the left the semi-underground little church built over the graves of Joseph and Mary; and is split into four, Gethsemane lying in the angle between the two that take to the right. Following the road that runs towards the south, Gethsemane with its gloomy cypresses showing above its wall at your left hand, you begin the ascent of Olivet. A long upward slope, still southwards, and again over numberless graves, brings you to the depression that divides Olivet from the Mount of Offence—on the face of which, as already stated, down at the south end of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, lies the village of Siloam, over against the pool of the same name. From this saddle you take your last look of Jerusalem, the Temple ground lying immediately opposite, and pass on, with your face to the east. Soon the road descends, bringing you into a back gorge of Olivet, to the left. Ascending again, you traverse another bare and bouldered flat, like that from which you took your last view of the city, and suddenly come upon Bethany.

On the rocky summit by the wayside, just before you descend into the village, you welcome a spring of water, which here issues from a pipe, and supplies the villagers. A number of women are generally congregated here :

to-day some of them are washing clothes by the pipe; others are filling great earthenware jars, which they carry on their heads, both arms hanging idly by their sides. The skill with which those huge and heavy burdens are borne is astonishing: no danger of their being let fall: you get uneasy when you see the tall object sway a little, as if a crash were inevitable; but it always rights itself again. Down the rather precipitous path, you pass the village, which lies entirely on the left, and consists of a few lanes of rude flat-roofed dwellings, but is withal a pretty spot. Still down, and you cross the gardens and olive groves in the hollow, ascending again a spur of Olivet—the last. Immediately to the right, over some heights and hollows, lies Abu Dis, between which and your path are several orchards, all white—the almond tree is in blossom.

Pushing on, you begin to descend: and here you have your first experience of really rough roads. Jumping off your donkey, and laying the reins over the saddle, you leave that patient and plodding creature to find his own way, which he is very well able to do: and you set about wondering how best, or rather how at all, you are going to get along. This is called a road, but looks like what might at one time have been a zig-zag stair cut out of the rock, but long since broken as if of set purpose, and the fragments left scattered about. Wonderful creatures those donkeys are: to watch the knowing way in which they look around, the caution with which they set down one foot, satisfying themselves that it is secure before lifting another, and doing all this without any wasting of time, you can hardly think of them as other than human. Their very eyes have about them an uncomfortably human expression. Poor things! they have never known any other kind of roads than these—not, at least, for their habitual work. Winding down into the valley by dint of sliding, stumbling, and leaping, and not without much

ankle-twisting, you are glad to rest a little while at the Apostles' Spring.

Here a pipe in a somewhat pretentious piece of wall pours forth a constant stream of water into a trough. Opposite, on the south side of the valley, stands a hut, stone-walled, but tent-roofed, where refreshments may be had. A boy comes across from it, holding out some oranges for sale, and offering you the use of a glass with which to take a drink. A few jaded horses are drinking, and their drivers are taking anxious looks at the long stair-way they are so soon to have to climb. Here you learn that the donkeys belonging to your conductor have passed on their way, and that the loads have undergone sundry shakings, the big boy in charge of them having been at his wits' end. This youth, as you shortly get to know, is not wanting in capacity, nor is he scarce of resources. A big bony fellow, clad in a soiled white frock, with a red fez on his head, and on his feet the usual broad shoes—originally red, now brown—but no stockings, he pulls the piled-up goods now to this side of the beast, now to that, as if he could, if necessary, carry both burdens and donkeys.

On overtaking him, you find him rather handicapped by the unconveyable nature of one of the loads. He has stopped, and is adjusting a door, which is the main portion of the burden of one of the donkeys, and which has been tied lengthwise on the creature's back. In addition to this unwieldy article, there are on the same donkey a mirror and several tin jars, brand new and glittering—the latter being suspended over its neck, and adorning its fore-quarters like a necklace of gigantic trinkets. Thud, thud, goes the door, beating now on the donkey's head, now on his hindquarters, at every step. You wonder that the youth in charge had not bethought him of placing the door broadwise instead of lengthwise: this would have obviated the thump, thumping, which must have been maddening to the beast, and is not a little galling to yourselves. He

has objections, however, to that method, and perseveres in his own way, stopping now and then to stuff a piece of doubled up sack between the donkey's rump and the door, and another piece forward to keep the head from being hit. A few paces, and these precautions prove a delusion: the bumping is resumed in spite of the pads, which persist in shifting, push them in ever so tightly. And grateful must be the loosening of those stuffings, for the more forcibly either end of the door is pushed up, the tighter the string that encircles both door and donkey. At length it becomes plain that a rearrangement is inevitable. Calling a halt, the master himself proceeds to remove the entire load. You are ready to lend a hand, but are begged to look after the other donkeys in the meantime. Off comes the door; off the mirror and the string of jars; off all the other things; forth are poured the stones that had been stowed in a bag for the purpose of balancing the load: a new beginning is to be made. Arranging a bed for the door, by sewing folded pieces of sack on either side of the pack-saddle—you are surprised to see a darning needle produced—they place the article this time broadwise. The string is again passed under the animal; but strings are led also from the front of the saddle to the back, as well as in sundry other directions, the whole performance reflecting creditably on the operator's ingenuity, but leaving on you the impression that the donkey is being laden once and for all, for the rest of his existence.

Now for a start in earnest; for this has been a wasting of time, and a long journey lies before you. In your excitement over the reloading, you have let the donkeys stray. Two of them have taken to fighting, and the laden one has scrambled up the hill-side, and can only be brought down again with difficulty: it would be an awkward occurrence were he to capsize and roll down to the bottom. The big boy manages all this, and you are once more on your journey. Some sulky Bedouins you

meet are forced to smile at the donkey with the door on its back, as they lazily clear out of the way to let it pass.

Down the valley, thinking of Shimei, who here or not far off cursed and threw stones at David, you skirt the dry water-course that lies in the bottom, passing now half-an-acre of corn land, green and pleasant to the eye—a patch reclaimed from the stony mountain-side—now a flock of glossy black goats, with ears half a yard long, the kids lying upon stones and among shelves of the rocks, in places apparently inaccessible; now a shepherd on the hill, on the farther side of the valley, a most formidable and uninviting-looking character, with long single-barrelled brass-mounted gun slung across his back, and stationed by his side a huge black and white dog, more like a lion than like any dog you have ever seen, the light brown sheep, all of them having the so-called fat tail, feeding quietly in front of him. This tail, so often mentioned in the Old Testament, is not in itself fat: those sheep have the ordinary tail: but the hindquarters are elongated, and hang down, a large fatty mass, behind the legs, to about the same depth as the tail.

A little farther on, and you are startled to find yourselves face to face with a body of horsemen. First comes a gaily-attired guardian, with sword and pistol; immediately behind him two mules bearing a palanquin, the two foreshafts of which are borne by the one mule, and the two hinder ones by the other. The inmate, or “fare,” who bows civilly to you as you pass, does not seem to be so very comfortably seated after all: he has to put up with a good deal of jolting, and might easily be thrown out, the sides of the conveyance not being high enough to lend him any protection in the event of the mules giving him a sudden jerk. This mode of conveyance is only had recourse to by well-to-do persons who cannot ride; and, generally, one day of it suffices, the traveller making up his mind that he would rather walk, or not go at all, than

endure such shaking. It can be no great pleasure to sit on a wooden platform, a hand firmly fixed on either side of it to prevent yourself from being tumbled out. It is a mode of conveyance, however, which, according to the revised version of the Scriptures, was in vogue in the olden time: for in the Song of Solomon we read that "King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon."

Leaving the valley of the watering-place, you descend to the right into the Camel Valley, and traverse the dry bed of the stream. Crossing a hill, you next descend into the Sidr Valley, at the farther end of which, ascending to the high ground, you come upon the Inn of the parable, half-way house, and indeed the only house—though it is hardly a house—between Bethany and Jericho, if you except the little refreshment hovel at the Apostles' Spring, where you drank; which, by the bye, is the only spring to be met with on the entire journey. Nor is there a single tree to be seen all the way.

The weary fifteen or sixteen miles through the wilderness from Bethany to Jericho can never have known anything but desolation. There is no spot on the way where the traveller could possibly picture to himself that a village, let alone a town, could ever have stood. The inn, half-way house, is the only habitation that commends itself to the imagination as, in the nature of things, at all likely to have ever been deemed practicable, except the castle that stood at one time at the entrance of the pass, just above the Jordan valley. And the inn, after all, is hardly what to the Western mind an inn would be. This building stands on the left side of the path to one going down to Jericho. Its site is an elevated piece of ground: and the structure itself consists, roughly, of a strong stone wall, eight or ten feet high, enclosing a square space of the size of a moderately large garden. The traveller is disappointed at its appearance—unless, indeed, he has had

experience of inns (or Khans, as they are called in the East) : and you share in this feeling of disappointment. Hearing a good deal about the inn, and the pleasures of a break in this most tedious and tiresome of journeys, you have been looking forward to a comfortable rest at it ; but this old, grey, battered, and weather-beaten wall appears not at all enticing as a guest-house. On the contrary, the place promises to be foul and neglected in the interior : and that is just what, on entering its precincts, you find it to be. The entrance is by a gateway, in the middle of the front wall—that is, the wall that skirts the path. Riding in, you find yourself in a roofed colonnade that extends the whole length of the front wall. Your beasts are turned loose into the open, and you yourselves step on to the paved floor to the right, and lie down on a piece of matting. Here are squatted some half-dozen Arabs, their beasts stalking about the enclosure in the hope of picking up any overlooked bit of vegetation or morsel of bread. The donkeys seem less tired than you would have supposed : and, instead of lying down after a good drink at the trough—which is always replenished from the well underneath—as you would have thought they would have been only too glad to do, they set about fighting. One of them especially, a stranger, seems bent on molesting one of yours, probably as being an intruder ; though the unwonted spectacle of a donkey with a door on its back may have attracted his attention, and what seems to you hostility may be only meant for good-natured banter. Its owner has had to rise once already to drive it away to a farther corner ; but it has returned, and the fight is being renewed, when the rough-looking fellow, irritated at having to rise a second time, seizes a stone the size of your two fists, and throwing it with unerring aim, hits the aggressor right on the top of the head. The missile rebounds off the creature's skull, as from a rock, falling half a dozen paces off. This is rather serious : your only

wonder is that the beast survives. Its driver, however—for probably he is not its owner, otherwise he would show more regard for its life—is not in the least disconcerted, but exhibits symptoms of a rather nasty readiness to repeat the assault, should it be again provoked. As for the unfortunate donkey, it looks as if nothing had befallen it. But your guide, instinctively divining your dislike of such scenes, proceeds to tie up both beasts at a respectful distance from each other : and thereafter there is peace.

Luncheon, consisting of the usual cold fowl, hard-boiled eggs, bread, cheese, and oranges, with a handful of raisins thrown in—all of which were put up in parcels for you by the hotel people at Jerusalem—is withdrawn from the saddle-bags. There is enough for your attendants as well as for yourselves. The poor fellows spread the repast for you on the floor, and, seating themselves a little way off with their backs to you, they affect to engage in a confidential chat until you shall have finished. But this arrangement you do not like : it would better suit your notions of the fitnesses of things that all four should lunch simultaneously. Accordingly you divide the spoil, and the feast is an occasion of unfeigned delight. The open yard in front of you is not a pretty, and certainly not a sweet, prospect. But the stone floor on which you sit is clean : and it is refreshing to be under a roof from the sun ; albeit the whole thing is suggestive of picnicking in a row of cart-sheds, looking out by the pillared front into a cattle-yard. The worst feature of the feast is the water—as usual. That well in the middle, from which the trough for the beasts is supplied, is not beyond suspicion. You have noticed, to your discomfort, that any of the water spilt from the trough runs down into the well again, and any refuse lying about is also washed down into it. Besides, it is only stagnant rain-water at the best. These considerations determine your action : an orange must suffice for drink, although that is a very temporary make-shift,

and you are already getting uncomfortably thirsty. For the rest of the way you must bear this much of discomfort. But the traveller who expects to find travelling a luxury—at least in these parts—will be disappointed.

An hour's rest, and you are again on the way. The hills all around are beginning to be less stony. There is a softness in their appearance which is restful to the eye. Almost sandy-looking, they wear a coating of grass and small bushes, some patches of which are fairly luxuriant; but its general aspect is that of a thin and fading head of hair—a thing, by the bye, little known in Eastern lands. Yet, scant as the pasture is, flocks here and there are busy on it. Down the steep path, zig-zag into another valley, and you are waked up from the dazed condition into which this interminable glen-treading has rocked you, by the novel sight of half a hundred horses dotted on the hill-side. These have been sent down from Jerusalem, to recruit after hard work and systematic starvation; and at night they are driven into the khan which you have just left. Allowed to remain out all night, they might stray ever so many miles off—for fences are unknown here—and it is always within the bounds of probability that if the Circassians from beyond Jordan had a hint of any such opportunity of exercising their peculiar calling, every beast would cross the river, and never be heard of again.

By and by a pleasant break in the monotony of narrows is afforded by a widish expanse of flat, across which the path leads. Here you fancy you breathe more freely: the tiresome and too obtrusive hill-sides you have managed to push from you on either hand: and although still stony enough, the plain is green, and your journey over it is a luxury. Here several camels in single file are meeting you—the first that you have met on this journey—and you wonder if they can be going any farther than to the khan: for it seems hardly possible that they should ever make Jerusalem. But who can tell what that persevering

animal may not accomplish? It will kneel, and let itself be laden with the stock of a warehouse; it will rise at the bidding of its driver, and proceed along a road which is no road; it can journey for days without water, and almost without food, and is so ready to answer the call of duty and resume its march by night or by day that they tell you the camel never sleeps: it is the noblest beast in the world, the most dignified, and probably the worst used.

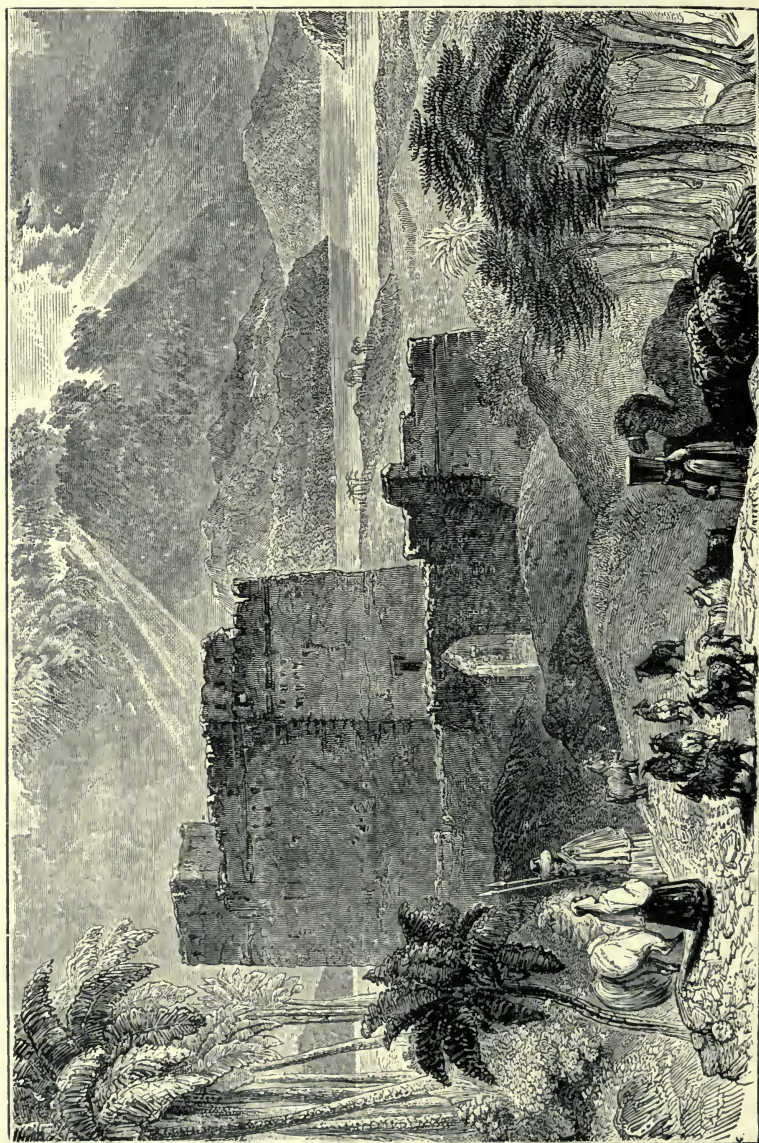
But this pleasant spot is soon left behind. Up again, and over another height, and round the hill-side, and down cautiously into the bed of the stream, you advance towards the foot of sheer cliffs, beyond which to all appearance there is no passage. But the stream, when it comes—which it manifestly does sometimes, and with a vengeance, though the channel is at present dry—knows its way: and you find, on advancing, that it has provided a path for itself and you. On and on, along what you hardly know to regard as a recently made highway, the metal being newly spread, and spread so evenly, or as the work of nature, the doing of the torrent. But no human macadamizers have ever laboured here. Up again, and round another hill, the big boy meanwhile running over it and meeting you on the other side, bringing with him a freshly-cut switch which he had coveted from below. How energetic and enduring! Down into the valley again. Here come three Arabs on foot, terrible-looking creatures, bare-breasted, tanned and wrinkled, but powerful men, and each, like the shepherd you saw, armed with a long gun slung across the back. They give you a friendly salutation, which you return of course: and, eyeing you with evident curiosity, they stand and look after you. A shot from one of those long barrels would be rather awkward; but the truth is, the practice of carrying guns in these parts is more with a view to bringing down a casual bird than acting either on the offensive or defensive. Fashion, too, has a good deal to do with it.

Still forward, round the base of another hill : and now some cattle grazing meet the eye. You are evidently drawing nearer to human habitations. The door on the donkey's back wants fixing again : it has had several encounters with the rocks in narrow parts, and has had to be readjusted oftener than once : and now it is being finally fixed for the passage along the side of this deep ravine, a tumble into which would be disastrous. How refreshing to look down upon the stream that flows in the bottom, far below ! This is the first stream you have seen in the whole hill-country of Judea—though even this, they tell you, dries up, and is what Jeremiah would call “a deceitful brook.” It is none other than the Cherith, where Elijah hid himself : and the great lone mountain-heights forming its northern bank are pointed out as the theatre of our Lord's forty days' fast. A foot-path, on the opposite side from you and far below, well-defined, but dangerous to tread—as a slip would precipitate the wayfarer over cliffs sheer fifty feet in height down into the brook—leads to a monastery away over the heights, meant to mark the scene of the Temptation. In the cliffs above the pathway are rock-hewn tombs and cave dwellings ; for it has been the custom at one time for Christians to come here to share in their Lord's experience of solitude.

Glimpses of the upper end of the Dead Sea surprise and delight you ; and the great mountain range in the land of Moab, steep, and straight as a tableland along the top, bounds the view to the east. This range you have often seen before. From the Mount of Olives you have craned and stretched yourself, in the hope of peering far enough down the rocky steeps to catch a glimpse of the bituminous lake ; but to no purpose. The first view of it burst unexpectedly upon you that memorable day you spent in the trackless waste between Tekoa and Mar Saba : from a bare height you looked down upon the

endless stretch of water. Yet this evening the view breaks upon you with all the freshness of novelty, for you look from a different standpoint.

An hour more, and you have traversed the Cherith glen side, and begin the descent into the plain of Jordan: the wilderness of Judea lies in the rear, and you are sliding down the face of the hill into the fertile flats. A couple of miles, and you turn aside across the Cherith—broad-bedded, as if wont to grow to much larger dimensions—and into Jericho. You started at eleven, but now the sun is going fast down in the west: it is considerably after six.



JERICHO.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE JORDAN VALLEY.

THERE have been three Jerichos—all of them in the same neighbourhood, on the edge of the Jordan valley. The site of the oldest, that of the time of Joshua, lies at the foot of Mount Karantel the scene of the Temptation. To go direct to it, you would turn to the left immediately on getting out of the Cherith glen, and, fording the Cherith, would proceed north by the foot of the hills for about a mile. A spring, called Elisha's fountain, serves to mark the spot. The site of Jericho the second, that of the New Testament times, lies immediately on your right as you emerge from the Cherith glen. There is a pool here, called the Pool of Moses—a large reservoir once used for irrigation purposes in those happy days when the district was a paradise: and near this most probably stood the palace where Herod the Great used to reside during the winter, and where eventually he died. Jericho the third, modern Jericho, lies in the plain a couple of miles down the Cherith, on the left bank of that brook, and consists of only a few hovels.

Before turning to cross the brook and enter the village, you pass the remains of some rather handsome aqueducts. As for the village itself, you wonder where it is. The white hotel is visible, and another white building enclosed in a garden—a Greek monastery, where accommodation can be had for man and beast—and, a few paces farther

east, an old watch-tower, said to mark the site of Zaccheus's house. Besides these three, there is hardly another building visible at first; but, on a closer inspection, you begin to descry the mud hovels of the native population.

Attached to the north end of the hotel is a row of one-storey buildings, used as stables and outhouses. These face the hotel garden; and, along by the back of these and the front of the hotel, is an open space, which you might term the forum or market-place of Jericho. Its opposite or east side is lined by the villagers' huts; and as you pass—whether by the south-east corner towards the Greek monastery and the tower, or by the north-east where the footpath goes out towards the far-off Jordan bridge—you encounter some formidable thorn hedges. These are as deep as half a dozen ordinary hedges: and they seem to answer the purpose of a fence equally well whether growing or only heaped up. The spines on these thorns are of such enormous length that tradition has been tempted to affirm that it was from a hedge of this kind that our Lord's crown was plucked.

This evening the villagers are seated about their doors, the day's work ended: for they are cultivators of the soil, and farm little patches outside the village. There are huts behind this row that skirts the open space in front of the hotel: in fact, they are dotted about like so many pigsties in gardens. The front row, however, being more in the world than the rest of them, seems to be a general rendezvous. It is the custom of some dragomans to engage these poor people to dance, by way of entertainment to the traveller. They are, nevertheless, about the most unlikely dancers conceivable, and their performance is said to be utterly unattractive. The nearest approach to it which you witness is the jumping and hand-clapping of three children, who no doubt imitate their seniors. From your perch on the hotel roof, you look down at the

small voluntary performers, and finally drop them a coin as fee for entertainment rendered. This at once changes the aspect of the scene. The biggest of the three, a girl, makes a rush at the next biggest, also a girl, and sends her sprawling on the ground : she serves the third, a very small boy, in a similar fashion, and then picks up the money. You stipulate that the next coin, which you are about to drop, must go to the small boy. All in vain : the big girl has it again. This time you remonstrate, and warn, and threaten ; but it would all have been again in vain, had not a motherly-looking woman, who chanced to be passing the south end of the hotel, carrying water from the stream that here flows past the village from Elisha's fountain at old Jericho, set down her jar, and whacked the grabber into disgorging.

The evening is spent in hearing the hotel people discourse about the neighbourhood. First of all you must have a look at the improvements that are being carried out on the hotel itself. It is for these that the door which the donkey bore from Jerusalem is wanted. After the manner of Eastern dwellings, the entrance to this house is by a passage which leads right through the building. In this case, however, instead of the usual enclosed court, you have the garden on one side. It is pleasant to come out here after dinner, and sit under the gangway that leads to the rooms upstairs—for all the doors are entered from the open air. Two or three Chinese lanterns are hung here, giving just light enough to show that, a couple of paces in front of where you sit with your back to the wall, there is a low parapet, beyond which rises the rich foliage of the garden. Your muleteers look into the little quadrangle, and, receiving a friendly nod, take courage and pass in front of your chair, making for the open door of the kitchen on the south side. The whole concern gives you the idea of a happy family : for not only the muleteers, but the donkeys as

well, have entered by the same front door as yourself, and are your companions under lock and key for the night. As for the village, it is quite shut out in the rear, and probably the villagers are by this time fast asleep. The landlord's sister, a comely Jewess in her teens, but dressed after the latest Parisian fashions, makes herself useful and agreeable in answering all inquiries. She has a few curiosities in the shape of Jordan stones, decorated on one side with a picture of our Lord's baptism. These, she informs you, are gathered and painted by an old woman of the village: and for the painter's benefit she gives visitors an opportunity of inspecting them, and also of purchasing, if so minded, for a trifle. You dread increasing your baggage inordinately; but you cannot resist the mute appeal *ad misericordiam* on behalf of the poor pious woman: and so you select from some half-dozen a flat round stone about the size of a crown piece, to be taken home as a trophy from the plain of Jordan.

Naturally, to-morrow's plans are talked over: you are to visit the Dead Sea and the Jordan, and must bathe, of course, in both. It has long been your desire to swim across the Jordan, and stand in the land of Moab, as you have heard of others doing: and now that the time for realizing those dreams has come so near, you can already almost feel the chill of the first header taking your breath away. The young lady chancing to hear mention made of some intention to swim the river, entreats you to cease once and for all to contemplate such a mad course. You are disposed to scoff at her fears; for, if need be, could you not cross the Jordan under water? But you begin to gather that there are certain peculiarities attaching to this river, the like of which you have not previously had experience of, and which even now, while the young lady describes them, you cannot quite appreciate. They tell you—what indeed you heard at Jaffa long ago—the singular story of the horse. A party of

travellers, mounted on horses and donkeys, had left this hotel to visit the Dead Sea and the Jordan, as you intend to do to-morrow. There is no water to be had between Jericho and the Dead Sea: nor of course on the salt shores of the sea itself: neither is there any on the way from it to the bathing-place on Jordan. The beasts, therefore, might be supposed sadly in need of drink by the time they reach the bathing-place—the journey up to that point having taken more than three hours, and that under a scorching sun. And sure enough, no sooner did the party of this narrative approach the river than one of the horses, more impatient than the rest, cantered forward to the brink, and eagerly began to drink. The soil being clayey, and the bank therefore slippery, the animal slid into the stream; and, to save itself from being swept down by the swift current, it struck out for the farther side. This it managed to reach; and clambering up, it would fain go forth. But the slippery clay met it again, and in spite of all its efforts to effect a landing, its forefeet always slid down. The poor beast became frantic, and striking with all its might, its feet soon got caught, like a fly's in liquid gum. Its efforts now were directed solely to extricating itself from the dire grasp of the clay. It pulled upwards and pushed downwards, and finally disappeared—packages and all; for it had the lunch on its back.

The story of the drowned horse is vouched for, and you are bound to believe it: for they all, both here and at Jaffa, protest that it is a fact which came under their official notice. This rather damps your ardour. If the banks are so slippery it will not be so pleasant or easy to land as it would have been had there been rocks, or a pebbly edge, or even a grassy slope to scramble out upon. However, you are still half persuaded that surely there must be some point where one could land—some spot where a bush overhangs the stream, getting hold of a branch of which one need not necessarily come to grief.

They perceive your dogged determination to try after all. Then comes a further disclosure. You are told of a gentleman, a visitor at the hotel last year, who positively would not be dissuaded from swimming the Jordan. They begged and prayed him to let it alone; but swim he would, and swim he did. He went down to the bathing-place, attended by competent muleteers who witnessed the catastrophe. Diving boldly into the stream, he rose and struck out for the other side; but the swiftness of the current was too much for him, accomplished swimmer though he was. It swept him down: and if, as is not improbable, he reached the other side and clung to the over-hanging bushes of the jungle which closes in upon the stream on either bank and hides it from view, he must have sunk like the horse, for his body was never recovered.

All this makes you rather doleful. You are not so brimful of conceit as to fancy yourself necessarily better able than other people to cope with the peculiar difficulties of this evidently extraordinarily uncanny river. Cross it, however, you must—whether by swimming or in some other way: and, if all the truth has to be told, you are not a little relieved to hear of a bridge a few miles up. By the time you retire to your room, you have got somewhat reconciled to the situation. It is a coldish night; the wind is keen, and smells of the cheerless wilderness of Judea from which it blows; and altogether the elements are appearing in a less kindly aspect than they did a little while ago. You are beginning to regard the latter as man's inveterate foes; and *terra firma*, and especially a roof, have tangible charms. True, your door opens right upon the night; and your boots, when you put them out, are entrusted, you feel, to any hungry and adventurous jackal that may stroll in through the garden, or to the chance of being filled with water should it rain before morning; but your body is safe and comfortable. The

elements are all very well in their own place ; but neither are the resources of civilization to be despised.

Happily the morning is dry and bright—though the rainy season is hardly over—and by the time you have breakfasted the sun is hot, and everything promises well for the expedition. The only thing that mars the pleasure of the prospect is the fact of certain rather warlike preparations which, you cannot help observing, are being made by the chief muleteer. Some busy trafficking is going on between the landlord and him—some discussing and resolving—and finally a long single-barrelled gun is produced. This is loaded after the old fashion of ram-rod days, and an unpleasantly suggestive bullet deposited by way of top-dressing—the wild eye of the muleteer regarding it with a malicious curiosity as much as to say, “ I wonder where your next lodgment is destined to be.” This operation completed, the weapon is slung across his back after the orthodox fashion, and things are getting into shape for a start. Provisions of course, and a couple of bottles of water, are prime essentials. There is always something fascinating about the work of preparing for a picnic, and this is practically nothing else : for the dash of adventure thrown in only serves to add zest to the outing. The young lady kindly busies herself in seeing that none of the elements of a toothsome feast are being omitted, and you fancy she is not a little cheered by your half-admitted abandonment of the swimming project.

At length, everything ready, you are beckoned to follow : and mounting your own donkey—a little pet not unlike an overgrown rat—you are off for the Dead Sea. The distance they have informed you is two hours—they count by hours not miles—but you are incredulous ; for does not the sea seem quite near ? There it lies, brightly reflecting the morning sun, just a little way to the south : it is as distinctly visible as though you were beside it. Indeed its shores form the immediate foreground of the

grand if desolate landscape which meets the eye as one looks in this direction from Jericho; and though very much on a level with Jericho it seems to lie at your feet. But going over the ground is the best way to measure distances in these parts. It is already a long while since you rode across the open space from the hotel door, entered the narrow path between the thorn fence of the village and the wall of the monastery garden, and took to the open prairie; and yet the Dead Sea seems as far off as ever, if not even farther. The level ground is deceptive; for the path is not bad, and you have been pushing on at a fair pace. Some long-horned cattle grazing, the property of the Arabs who live in those black tents you have just passed, are the only living things you come across. But the prairie teems with lovely flowers: it is one vast carpet, fresh and untrodden, and its tints no dyer could equal. A prairie pattern of nature's designing must needs be on a grand scale: and here you have it. The parterres in the public parks of the West, showing great expanses of one colour as borders, and again a bed of a different hue as centre-piece, find here their prototype. Deep and endless are the borders of blue—giant forget-me-nots—and broad the circles of dark poppies. Nature seems to work here untrammelled, and the stray visitors to these parts have the privilege of seeing what she can really do.

The path grows less distinct. You have now reached the broken part of the plain, and you begin to perceive the absolute necessity of a guide. The river has evidently in course of ages risen and spread far and wide, and run the soft earth away, leaving a positive chaos of hard mounds and sinky hollows. To all appearance the footpath runs right through among those bushes in front: and were you left to your own resources you would take that course: but the guide knows that the last rising of the waters, or washing of the rain torrents,

has changed the face of the ground here; and were you to go straight forward among those bushes you would run a fair risk of tumbling headlong into a slime pit and disappearing, donkey and all. These sinky hollows are like foam on the sea: they seem to be of a hard consistency; but drop into one and you will be undeceived. This is no exaggeration, for you have proved it by pushing a stick into the mud.

Now you are fairly among the heights and hollows, the plain having been left behind high and dry. Many of these mounds are fifty feet in height, and might pass for miniature pyramids, or great blocks of houses. In the Book of Job we read, concerning the hippopotamus, "Behold if a river overflow he trembleth not: he is confident though Jordan swell even to his mouth." And in a previous chapter of the same book we read, concerning the wicked man, "Terrors overtake him like waters"—the reference probably being to the rising Jordan. Again, in the Psalms, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink. Let not the waterflood overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up." Also, in the same book we have, "Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds." Jeremiah says, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Also, "He shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the strong habitation." This morning you comprehend such passages in a way you never did before.

Through the tufty grass and you stand on the pebbly beach of the Dead Sea. The muleteers squat beside the donkeys while you prepare to bathe. The beach, which slopes gently to the water's edge, is only about twenty paces broad, and is thickly strewn with dry sticks. These have come down the Jordan and been blown and drifted ashore. How clear the water is! You

had half expected to see a nondescript liquid element : for had you not read of this sea as a bituminous lake ? The bottom is plainly visible, however, and the sunshine is beautifully reflected from some of the whiter pebbles. You stoop and take a mouthful of the much maligned water. There is nothing about it different from ordinary sea water except that it is infinitely saltier than anything you have ever tasted : so salt is it, indeed, that you utter an exclamation of surprise ; at which the muleteers exchange meaning looks and laugh, as much as to say, " These strangers have learned something to-day : they had no idea of the uncommon saltiness of our sea."

The bathe is not intolerably unpleasant, although certainly it would be an improvement could they heat the water just a very little : it is intensely cold. In this you have a surprise no less than in the matter of the saltiness ; for the sun is powerful. That is a coldish wind nevertheless. Possibly also, you had got somewhat heated with the journey. Nor is it improbable either, that the very thought of sea-bathing in February may have something to do with the timidity you feel in " going over." But no doubt the chief reason lies in the fact of your having to wade in : you are debarred from rushing rapidly forward and throwing yourself down head-foremost : to do this, you have been told, would be more than dangerous, as you would never be able to get your head up again. You are somewhat sceptical on the point : you have a decided difficulty in believing that your feet would insist upon keeping uppermost. They tell you, however, this would be the case : and they deem it necessary to warn you against it. And so you are reduced to primitive wading ; which as a method of entering the water you have despised ever since you can recollect.

There is nothing for it then but to pluck up courage and advance. Half a dozen steps and you are in deepish water. Down over the head with as little delay as

possible. You have no difficulty in rising again: you stand where you stood. But, the smarting of the eyes! You rub and rub as if you must needs tear them out. Glad you are that you stand on a solid basis so as to have the free use of both hands. But rubbing does no good; and you are seized with a sudden alarm that probably you may have destroyed your sight, not having taken the precaution of shutting your eyes. Happily the smarting abates a little by and by, though a sensation of burning remains; and you take courage to wade farther in. It is by no means impossible to swim in this element: the truth is, did you not know it was the Dead Sea, and did you but keep your mouth and eyes clear of the water, you might scarcely suspect that you were swimming in anything other than common sea water. But the drying process reveals something further: rub as you please, you cannot get rid of a certain sticky feeling: and even after your clothes are on, you seem to have dressed without drying yourself.

Mounting the donkeys you are ready to start for the bathing-place on the Jordan, believing that a good shaking up will be the first thing to undo all the wrong that the Dead Sea has done you, and make you feel yourself again. Before turning to go, you must have one more look at this sheet of water and the parts adjacent. The point where you stand is of course on the north shore. Looking down the sea, the only boundary that meets the eye is the horizon: a shore some fifty miles distant you could scarcely hope to see. As for the side shores, both of them are plainly visible, the width across being only about eight miles, and your standpoint being about half-way between the two. On your right the pebbly beach curves towards the mountains of Judea, which then form the shore, and stretch, a great wall of scarred steeps—a peak here and a peak there rising slightly, but not sufficient to break the general level of the range—till

lost in the distance. This wall of mountains runs north as well. It was down through these you came, by the Cherith glen, when on your way to Jericho from Jerusalem: and they form the west side of the Jordan plain in which Jericho lies. The great range of the mountains of Moab forms the east side of the plain, and continues down the east shore of the Dead Sea. To understand the Jordan Valley you have to think of it as a vast stretch of land some eight miles wide, beginning in the invisible distance in the north, running south to the Dead Sea, and shut in on either side by a wall of mountains.

The east shore, then, of this sea is simply the range of the Mountains of Moab. These are more rocky and altogether grander than the Mountains of Judea that lie opposite to them. In truth there is a feeling of awe in the contemplation of those lofty cliffs that run sheer down into the deep water, leaving no passage for the prying pedestrian. In many parts, too, they almost seem to project the more the higher they tower. These are the dark brown, straight-down cracked, age-rounded, unearthly looking walls you have so often gazed upon from about Jerusalem.

As for the mouth of the Jordan, it is on your left, a good way round the bending shore: for the Jordan enters the Dead Sea not at the middle of its north shore but considerably nearer the Moabite side.

Taking a long last look at these scenes, you turn your donkey's head northwards and ride away. Your route this time lies nearly parallel to the river. It is very much a repetition of what you experienced coming down: only, this time the bush seems more hopelessly impenetrable. You had the open prairie before, until you got down into the lower level among the mounds and mud pits; but now your destination is far forward, somewhere to the right; and the intervening country is a wild jungle that seems to threaten no end of difficulties if



THE RIVER JORDAN.

not dangers. The white hotel at Jericho is visible in the distance. It appears quite at the foot of the Mountains of Judea, although you are aware it is a couple of miles into the plain: and all the country between you and it—on by some ruins and the supposed site of Gilgal—looks a fairly traversable region. The route you are on, however, towards that white ruin called the Jews' Castle, which you see peeping out far off in the jungle, promises to be impossible. The muleteers find a way nevertheless; and by and by you strike right towards the river, coming out upon the bathing-place all of a sudden. This is the Latins' bathing-place, and is believed to be the Bethabara where John baptized. That of the Greeks is a little higher up, by the ruined castle you have been watching so long.

To say that your first sight of the Jordan is disappointing would be to use a mild expression. Coming suddenly upon this mud-banked, yellow, eddying torrent, no more of it being visible than the bit where the trees and bushes that fringe its banks have been cleared to let the bathers approach, is to experience a rude shock. This is not the Jordan you had pictured to yourself with approachable banks like other rivers, grassy-edged, or rock-enclosed, and stony-bottomed. This is the most dreadful river you have ever seen or could conceive.

Hot as the sun is, and dry as the morning has been, the ground underfoot at the bathing-place is decidedly wet and spongy. It is as though there had been a constant succession of bathers coming up out of the river and letting the water drip off them, thus soaking the soil where they stood. Some patches of grass relieve the monotony of the bare clay surface. A few dead bushes lie about, stranded and partially buried. These serve for spreading the wet towels upon to dry. The whole cleared space is of limited extent: it may be fifty paces long, and in breadth scarcely as much. The

bush forms the background, while immediately above and below, you have the thicket of small trees, showing what has been cleared away. A couple of seedy-looking pilgrims are leaving the spot as you arrive. These gone, you have the place entirely to yourselves.

Standing on the brink, you gaze with curiosity on the Jordan. It is but little of it you see, however. Directly opposite, it seems to be twisting from the south, flowing straight towards you, again south in front of you with a rapid sweep, and disappearing, almost at once, in the thicket-fringed gorge. You can hardly estimate the width of the stream by observing it here, for this is one of its numberless bends. But it is a longish look to the farther shore—if indeed you can discern a shore at all, for you cannot tell where the water is coming from: what you see over there is water and bushes all hopelessly mixed up. You no longer desire to swim across: it is a sea without a shore.

And how brown the water is! Cold too. But you are bound to bathe, uninviting as the whole concern looks. Selecting a patch of grass on which to deposit your wardrobe, you proceed to lay down coat and hat, and to prepare for the dreaded plunge. The senior muleteer, who has been standing aloof, now approaches and warns you against casting yourself loose into the current. There are only two ways of it as you soon learn: you must either submit to having a string fastened to your arm, the other end of which will be held by the muleteer; or you must hold on by a branch of a tree nor by any chance let go your hold. You choose the latter alternative: ignominious as it is, it is less so than the other. You scoffed at both methods at first, thinking that the muleteer was simply looking at the matter from the point of view of a man who himself could not swim; but the earnestness of the fellow, the way he gesticulated and struck his open hands off each other, as much as to say, "If you

get in there, you are bound to be swept away," convinced you it would be prudent to yield to his entreaties; more especially too since, as he expressed it, he was in a measure responsible for your safety. At any rate it might be said in the event of an accident that it was owing mainly to his incapacity as a guide that it had happened, a stigma thus attaching to the poor fellow's professional character.

You can now understand how the ill-fated German had got swept away. Once down beyond the open he would have nowhere to land: clinging to the branches he might indeed prevent himself from being carried farther down; but it is doubtful whether he could have climbed up into that thick fence of bushes that overhangs the stream on either side: and if he could, the soft clay underfoot would have held him fast and eventually swallowed him up—which no doubt it did.

It is but a short step down from the level into the water. You choose a convenient tree at the upper end of the cleared space, your things lying a few paces to the rear. The trees are not large, most of them indeed being only of the thickness of your arm or less, as straight as a walking stick, and so closely set together that you could with difficulty effect an entrance among them. They are mostly Tamarisks, not unlike the willow.

The tree you have selected overhangs the stream. Laying hold of its trunk you slide down the smooth and slippery clay bank, and moving your hold to one of the lower branches you are soon in deep water. Down over the head to see if that will mend matters, for the cold is intense; but to your surprise you find yourself sticking among the branches of a submerged tree or bush, of which the surface of the water gave no indication. Pulling yourself out just by way of convincing yourself that you are not irretrievably committed to the tender mercies of this ill-conditioned river, you enjoy once more

the pleasure of standing on the land. Gladly would you cut the process short and not go in again; but that would be cowardly. Nothing for it but to make for the outstretching branch again. It would be very unsatisfactory work swimming on the top of a submerged thicket. Nor, truth to tell, is it altogether congenial to wash in such muddy water, though its fierce rushing is as good as a scrubbing-brush. The Jordan is always muddy here: it flows through a clayey region for many miles before reaching this spot.

While you dry and dress, the senior muleteer strips. As for the big boy, he is much too matter-of-fact to care to torture himself: his task will be to hold the end of the string, while his master floats a little way out into the current. You are greatly struck with the whiteness of the man's underclothing: to judge by his external appearance you would say that, under that somewhat soiled striped frock you would fairly expect to find raiment, to say the least not any cleaner, and probably more clouted. But not so. Those Orientals seem to be painfully logical. As the poor exterior of their dwelling-houses gives no notion of what splendour may be within, so with their dress.

But his courage fails. About ready to take the water, he approaches and stands on the bank. The cold touch however is enough. Laugh at him ever so loudly, he refuses to let himself be coerced. He seems somewhat ashamed to have undressed to no purpose, but his failure is fraught with consolation to you: until now you had been regarding your bathe as ridiculous: henceforth you will believe you have shown considerable fortitude.

Luncheon is most acceptable. You are advised to beware of unpleasant companions which they say are plentiful here, shaken out of the pilgrims' clothes; but you argue, and not without reason, that the spot where your clothes have lain may surely suit you to sit upon;

and so you take your chance. The water-bottles are emptied—your last drink on the journey—and filled from the river. You fill them with your own hand—it is a work of piety to do this: that water you will carry home to the West.

You next penetrate the thicket by the riverside in search of a stick. All you can find are a couple of quite straight ones—without handles, that is. They are hardly worth taking, but the muleteers tie them on the side of one of the donkeys; and the bottles being deposited safely in the same animal's pockets, a start is made for Jericho.

The road is rather more of a path than you found on the out journey: the pilgrim traffic has beaten it more into shape, though it is but a poor pathway after all. Hearing the word "caravan," those who have never visited the East are apt to suppose that one or more wheeled vehicles must be included in the cavalcade; but you yourselves to-day are a caravan, though, all told, you are but four persons, each on a donkey. And a caravan route is nothing more than a bridle track—a road which has grown, not been made.

Reaching the edge of the plain—for your route has lain through the lower region of clayey heights and hollows—you pass a few black tents. Their Bedouin owners are seated in front, while the children have come running forward to the path—one of them quite a grown-up young man—clamouring for baksheesh. A ferocious-looking dog too accompanies the juveniles, and so barks and snarls and snaps at your big boy's donkey that he jumps off his beast, and making for the assailant, deals it such a whack on the ribs with a substantial stick that it retreats towards the tents howling with all its might. This is sufficient baksheesh: you are permitted to proceed in peace.

The fathers of the encampment might have been supposed likely to resent this summary treatment: there they sit, sulky-looking fellows, witnessing the whole

transaction : but they never move : they even keep silence. And yet they are in a majority, and might have attacked you with impunity. Indeed this is such an encampment as travellers are supposed to be in dread of. But showing a bold front, you perceive, goes a long way. After this incident you are quite prepared to go patting all the Bedouins on the back, asking them after their welfare, and begging them not to mind the hard things that the guide books and most of the Jerusalem guides are wont to say of them. You heard from young Vester, the vendor of olive-wood nicknacks in Jerusalem, how that a couple of travellers had fallen among thieves down here. From the description this might be about the spot—though of course the Bedouin robber need not do all his plundering in the immediate vicinity of his tent ; it might please him better to stalk his quarry and stop him in a remote spot. At all events the two travellers in question had gone out of Jericho unattended bound for the Jordan. They returned, not only without what money they carried but also minus their clothes. If these Bedouins whose camp you have just insulted and outraged are given to plunder on occasion—most probably they are not—they deem this for some reason known to themselves an unsuitable occasion, notwithstanding the fact that you are here, and that not under the escort of the sheik of Abu Dis either.

Leaving the site of Gilgal on your right, you cross the Cherith, work up alongside that brook, and so back to Jericho. Riding into the village, past the tower, through the narrow passage, the Greek monastery on your left hand, and on your right the great thorn fence that encloses the village huts and cultivated bits, you are assailed by the native children clamouring as usual for baksheesh. Their seniors, seated in front of the huts, look on complacently. You ride across the open, and dismount at the hotel door, glad enough to get out of the

saddle if only for a time—for you have to start again by and by, this time for the Jordan bridge.

The bottles of Jordan water are your special care. Not that you have the remotest reason to suspect trickery on the part of any of the people about the hotel: far from it: but just lest it might occur to any one to pour out the sacred liquid and substitute the water of the place—although it would necessitate some contriving to make it as muddy as the original—you take the precaution of locking up your precious store. It would indeed be laughable were it not that it would be too sad, to go to the trouble of carrying this supply all the way to England, to give it out as genuine Jordan, and to gladden the hearts of pious parents by letting them have their infants sprinkled with it in baptism, while in reality it was drawn from the stream that flows through the hotel garden. No doubt it would be considered something to have water from this stream even: it comes from Elisha's fountain at the site of Joshua's Jericho: but then it would not possess the charm of Jordan water, in which our Lord Himself was baptized.

That stowed away, you seat yourself in the little quadrangle of the hotel and look out upon the garden. Immediately under your eye a curious spectacle meets your gaze. A couple of masons are at work at the south or left side of the quadrangle: they are busy with some alterations or enlargement: and it is here that the door which you brought down from Jerusalem is to be used. But it is not the masons that attract your notice, curious as they too look: it is the masons' labourer. This individual passes in front of you to and fro, now bearing on the head a burden of mortar, now returning board in hand to renew the load. This is the first time you have ever seen a woman employed as masons' labourer. A handsome Nubian, black as jet, straight as a pole, and adorned as to one of her nostrils with an ornament of lovely coral—

here is a subject for a picture. Continuing your leisurely inspection of this interesting labourer, you discover that she is tattooed round the throat—imitation of beads in blue—also round the wrists and ankles. You would be more, or rather less, than human could you resist the appeal she timidly makes to your generosity, when, passing unladen, she holds out her hand for a coin. It is not that she is begging: these Orientals must not be judged in the light of Western ways: you, and such as you, are regarded as possessors of untold wealth—otherwise you would never be here so far from home—and many besides real beggars hold out their hand if opportunity occurs. What chance can have brought this Nubian to such an out-of-the-way place as Jericho, and to such poor work? No doubt she is the wife of one of the masons, and having forsaken father and mother and country, cleaves to her husband through good report and ill report, faithful even unto death.

It is yet only early afternoon. The donkeys have had a fair rest however, and as the journey to the bridge is said to take an hour and a half, and a little while in addition will be wanted for an incursion into the territory beyond, you reckon that it will take you all your time to be back to dinner. While the beasts are being saddled you stroll into the garden and pluck some bananas. This is a fruit that grows only in warm climates; but here, you are some nine hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The banana is an improvement upon the apple of Sodom, one of which you picked up on the way home from the river: externally that so-called apple presents a fair appearance, though very tiny: but squeeze it, and it gives out a mixture of snuff and smoke. There are few palms here now: not because they refuse to grow, but because no one wishes to cultivate them. This garden boasts one or two, and a few adorn the grounds of the Greek monastery; but they are small in comparison with

the palms to be seen in Egypt. The rose of Jericho, which you have observed in basketfuls in Jerusalem, has its habitat nearer the Dead Sea. This curious plant keeps alive in a withered state for any length of time, and may be made to blossom by being set in water. Whether because in virtue of this peculiar quality it is supposed to be especially typical of the resurrection, or simply because it is an extraordinary plant and belongs to the district about Jericho—a potent name—it takes a place at any rate among the holy things, and is exposed for sale side by side with the beads, the mother-of-pearl crosses, and the microscopic views of sacred spots, which form the wares of the squatters who sit all day long in the paved court before the Church of the Sepulchre in the holy city.

Starting for the bridge, you ride out by the north-east corner of the oblong open space that runs north and south between the hotel buildings and the hovels of the village, the latter on your right. The road is but a footpath. Your course lies almost direct east. There is nothing to note on the way. The ground is flat—the prairie again. As you draw nearer to your destination you inquire, at intervals, whether there are as yet any signs of the bridge: the muleteer only points forward, and whips up his beast. Straining your eyes to the utmost, you fancy you at length see something resembling a bridge: it looks like a handsome stone structure of many arches and of considerable height, far off, slightly to the north. As you advance however, this seeming structure dies away, resolving itself into a jumble of yellow mounds. By and by you reach the limits of the prairie, and descend into the region of flood-swept heights and hollows. At present the place is quite dry. The path now lies slightly northwards, over the shoulder of one ridge, up the steep slope of another, down into a basin, round another mound, and so on till you come within sight of the river—not exactly the river after all, for it is absolutely hidden in the line of bush, which

twists like a serpent. Soon you ride into a swampy glen, at the farther end of which you see a few black tents. Approaching these, you find yourself entering a busy scene—if any scene in these uninhabited parts can be called busy. Here are numerous donkeys, standing and lying about, Bedouins seated in front of the tents, boxes and packages—a caravan station in fact. This is the bridge-end. Hemmed in by the clay heights on the west and by the bush on the north and east, the little settlement with its wood-hewing and its streak of smoke recalls what you have pictured to yourself as an Indian camp in the days of the Wild West. Only, there are no squaws in front of the tents: here the men reign alone.

Riding into the midst of this rough company you are slightly apprehensive. However, the muleteer evidently knows what he is about—although he showed signs of decided unwillingness to come here. Dismounting, and tying up the beasts beside one of the tents, you take the bull by the horns so to speak, and make for the bridge. The gate-keeper follows. This is something quite novel in the way of bridges. The bush has been cleared, and a mound raised at either side of the river. From mound to mound beams of wood have been stretched. On these a floor has been laid. A pair of upright beams and a cross one over their top, form a doorway on to the bridge at either end. Two long beams stretch from the top of the one doorway to the top of the other. Strong lattice work forms a wall on either side and a roof. A lattice gate in two halves closes the tunnel structure at either end. The whole is tarred. The keeper opens the gate, and naming the pontage, admits you. You have now an opportunity of stepping the river: it is thirty paces wide: but it looks very deep and rushes very fast. Immediately above the bridge it widens, and the approach at either bank suggests a ford. It is said to have been a ferry however, the fords being lower, at the present bathing places—though there

must have been great changes since the days when people could ford the river there, or thereabout.

This bridge seems rather critically situated: those mounds on which it rests are no doubt constructed as solidly as possible in the circumstances; but stone piers would have been more stable: the chances are that in some flood the earth will be washed from underneath, and the black tubular gangway carried bodily down, now striking with one end into the bush, and being held fast for a little, now turning and shooting forward, and eventually being wrecked at some unapproachable bend, there to lie till it breaks up.

As you issue from the farther end, and descend into the hollow, you meet a caravan. It is led by a woman on a donkey. You would say it was what they would call in Scotland a "flitting." The woman seems seated upon, and surrounded by, all the bedding of the household, while sundry articles of domestic furniture are suspended on either side the donkey. This lady is followed by a string of donkeys, all laden, and driven by two or three tramp-looking fellows. Here the roads from Heshbon and Ramoth-Gilead—the former lying slightly to the south, the latter considerably to the north, of a line drawn east from this point—and from Rabbath-Ammon, between the two, converge. Ramoth-Gilead is now called Es Salt. To it the journey is six hours from the Jordan bridge, and not unattended with danger. On that journey the big American who has been hanging about Jerusalem for the last twelvemonths, dreamily hoping to interest some capitalist in his scheme for utilizing the polishable rock of the district as table tops and what not, had a rather unpleasant experience. A most peaceable old man, for him if it were possible for any one you would have predicted an unmolested passage. When he and Benjey, however—a youth who has been a couple of years in the holy city, waiting for the sale of some land his father left in the

plain of Sharon—when he and Benjey set out to go to Es Salt on foot they underrated the risks of the way. They encountered several parties of roughs who jostled and threatened them, and who no doubt would have plundered them had they been worth plundering: and at one place they were actually stoned, one of the boulders flung after them striking the old man on the ankle, and injuring him rather seriously. But, are there no roughs in the West?

The journey to Heshbon—at the back of Nebo whence Moses viewed the land—is about the same distance, and that to Rabbath-Ammon a little longer.

You would fain go to Heshbon, if for nothing else than to see, in his own territory, the son of the sheik of the place, whom you met one evening in a house at Jerusalem. This man, attended by half a dozen followers, had come to buy and sell: and calling at the house, where he was a friend, the party were invited to stay the night. It so happened that that evening you went to spend an hour at that house. The Bedouins were accommodated with a good-sized room, the floor of which was littered with mattresses. On these they squatted, each man pulling at his narghile, and all enjoying themselves, though producing but little smoke.

On your entrance they all rose and saluted you in the Eastern fashion—that is, by bowing, and touching their breasts and foreheads with the right hand. They made themselves agreeable, showing the narghiles—the young sheik's being a remarkably lovely one, about half the usual size, and instead of plain glass, ornamented with purple designs. You gathered that the people of the house had known the sheik's family for long, and had on a recent occasion spent a week with them at Heshbon. There, in the grand tent—a hundred and fifty feet long, the women's apartments occupying one-half—they had been entertained right royally. In the midst of fairy-like splendour, with silk divans, and other articles in keeping, they lived on the fat of the land. It was as though they had been the guests

of Abraham and Sarah. Their host did not disguise the fact, however, that they looked upon robbery as their proper calling. They avoid violence if possible; but if three or four of them meet one or two of you, they simply call your attention to the disparity of numbers, and request you to hand over what you happen to carry. The people on the east side of Jordan hardly own the supremacy of the Turk: they are practically beyond the ken of the police. And things have not been improved by the settlement there of the Muslim Circassians. Tall, thin, but muscular fellows, clad in trousers, military-looking frock-coats, and turbans of Astrakan fur, and by profession unscrupulous bullies and thieves, they are a terror far and near.

On this occasion it contents you to have penetrated the jungle, and had a near look at the mountains of Moab, with their intersecting wadys or glens, and dreary passes: and having seen this much, you are glad to get back to the bridge, and through it again, and away from the black tents on your donkey, safe and sound. The ride home is accomplished with what expedition the beasts are capable of; once out of the region of heights and hollows, you make straight for Jericho, each donkey, like Homer's dog, "devouring the plain."

The great function of the evening—after dinner—is the boiling of the Jordan water. They tell you it must be boiled, otherwise it will not keep. Regarding this as an unwarrantable interference with the Jordan, you fill first of all one of the two tins you brought from Jerusalem, deeming it sufficient to have but the second tinful subjected to the process. The cook awaits you in the kitchen: he has a pan in readiness, and when you hand him the bottles he soon decants the contents, and sets them aboiling on the covered range. When slightly cooled, he restores the water to the bottles: and you resume possession.

You are struck with this man's appearance. Of the build and aspect of a ship's cook—he is not an Oriental—he might be a smart little man but for a tuft of wadding stuck on the under tip of his nose. To look at him is to explode with laughter. After laughing right in his face, you think you may as well inquire as to the reason of this adorning of the nasal organ. "The water," he replies: and pulling up his sleeves, he exhibits to your disgusted gaze several other outbreaks. The water from Elisha's fountain, which is all the drinking water they have here, and which comes to the village in a yard-wide stream, watering the hotel garden on the way, is believed to be naught: everybody here, after a six weeks' stay, breaks out in boils like this cook: and they blame the water. After suffering one outbreak, happily, you have no further trouble. In Second Kings we are told that the men of Jericho said to Elisha, "Behold, we pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth; but the water is naught." To-morrow morning, on your way back to Jerusalem, you are to go by this spring.

It was after leaving Gilgal that Elijah wished Elisha to stay behind, while he himself should go on to Bethel. The route lay through Jericho: and the journey from that place to Bethel would be quite easy—shorter than to Jerusalem, and a better road. It would probably be by this road that our Lord came to Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. For that journey, however, it was certainly a round-about, because at Bethel he would be already within ten miles of Jerusalem; but then Jericho was a place of such importance that it could not well be left out: and the best way of taking it in was to leave the direct Jerusalem road at Bethel—or farther north, as the case might require—and take to the Jordan valley.

From Bethel, Elijah, still dogged by Elisha, returned to Jericho: and from Jericho they proceeded to the Jordan. The narrative of Elijah's movements on this

occasion conveys the impression that he wished to get rid of Elisha : and the locality suits this idea exactly : it was a case of running back and forward.

You start in the morning at about seven to return to Jerusalem. The sun is already hot. Your party now numbers five : the young Jewess is taking the opportunity of the escort, and goes with you. Her white horse looks quite distinguished among the four dark donkeys. Indeed the procession might be taken for an outing of the fairies—the queen with four of her attendants, herself mounted on a milk-white steed. The route lies round the south end of the hotel, and, by the right, up the brook that comes from Elisha's fountain at the foot of the hills, and a good mile and a half ahead. The footpath, little traversed, is in many places invisible, the weeds and wild flowers growing over it, nearly breast high. You get a sore heart here : your dear little donkey, not seeing a big branch that lies across the path under the flowers, trips upon it, and comes to its knees. You are haunted with the vision of the poor plodding thing fallen on its head : and you blame yourself for the accident, for you caught sight of the stick in time, and might have guided the creature over it. You resolve to do lots of walking, and so render the homeward journey as easy for it as possible, by way of making up.

Arriving at the source, you are surprised to see a full-grown stream issuing from the base of the mountain, knee-deep, and a long step in width. The springs empty themselves into a small basin built of hewn stone ; and out of this basin the stream starts on its way. In the basin there is a good deal of commotion : the water pours in from the mountain side, and tumbles in eddies : but it is beautifully clear withal. On the slopes immediately adjoining the fountain, to the north, stood ancient Jericho ; and here remains of foundations are still to be seen. The city must have had a lovely prospect from these slopes :

this morning, standing above the fountain, and looking forth over the plain, first eastward to the mountains beyond Jordan, and then southward to the Dead Sea, you cannot but admire the good taste which led the original settlers to pitch here. The fountain no doubt had a good deal to do with the choice of site, although a supply of Jordan water could have been brought from the river higher up, and was brought at some time or other, as testified to by the remains of an aqueduct. The spot itself, however, is superb. It is a spur of the mountains, reaching out a little way into the plain, a site made by nature for a city. It watches for the morning sun coming up from behind the mountains of Moab in all his splendour.

Southward along the foot of the range, among ups and downs, for about a mile, and you reach the brook Cherith, a clear stream, rolling out towards the Jordan, over a lovely pebbly bed. It is too broad to be stepped: you have to ford it on donkey-back. And how the beasts rejoice! This is the first stream they have stood in for many a day; and they are loth to proceed. The wading sends through them a thrill of delight: you actually feel your little donkey's body quiver under you with joy. And they drink as if they never could be filled. The mule-teers also wade: they have only to draw their feet out of the flat slippers—once bright red but long since clay coloured—pull up their frocks, and descend. It is agreed to let the beasts have a real benefit. Landing, therefore, and dismounting, you turn the lot adrift into the stream. It takes the big boy all his time, however, to keep them from straying down stream among the overhanging bushes. This tendency to wander is taken as an indication that they have had enough; and a move is made, up the southern bank, towards the road, which passes up into the higher parts of the glen side—the road you came the other day from Jerusalem.



FORDING THE JORDAN.

Fairly up on the glen side, you pass along, looking down upon the brook you have recently crossed. It now rolls along, five hundred feet below : and on its other side you trace the perilous path that there winds, like a thread, in front of the cliffs and the rock dwellings, up the glen towards the monastery that marks the scene of the Temptation.

Waving a far farewell to the pleasant brook, you turn slightly southwards, and are once more working your weary way up the stony glens and round the bare hills of the Wilderness of Judea. The khan is again a welcome break in the journey. On this occasion you are treated with a measure of distinction, entirely owing to the presence of your companion the Jewess, who is well known here. Not that there is a landlord : the enclosure exists for the public good. But the people who happen at this time to be down here from Jerusalem with their beasts for grazing, have a supply of produce at hand : and they are not backward in sharing it with a friend. They kindly offer you a basin of butter-milk, with which to wash down your lunch. It tastes sweeter than any butter-milk you have ever tasted before, though it is but goat's milk, and in a copper basin, from which you all three drink in turn.

This khan used to have a landlord ; but the poor man was so beaten and plundered every time the Circassians passed this way, that he had to retire. One wonders, hearing these things, that the people do not combine, and put their foot upon the Circassian pest. But he would be hard to beat : he is, among common earth beetles, the long thin jet-black one which you sometimes see digging at a bleeding worm, and which, the moment you touch it, curls up its tail and shows fight. It is a thousand pities Turkey ever allowed him to settle in her dominions : his Mohammedanism, on the plea of which he claimed to be transplanted, must have been but a pretext to get away from under the iron hand of Russia.

Starting again, you plod on your weary way. By and by, far ahead, you see the tower high up on Olivet. Between it and you lies a troubled sea of wilderness. But it is wonderful how that sea narrows as you push on. At the Apostles' Spring your beasts drink for the final effort: up the terribly rough steep, and you have but a little way to go to Bethany—practically home. Here the white almond trees remind you that the wilderness has been left behind.

Over two shoulders of Olivet in quick succession, and you once more gaze upon the holy city, the Temple ground lying immediately in front, and the Valley of Jehoshaphat, yawning wide and deep, dividing between you and it. Here Olivet is very bare. As you turn northwards to go down the slope towards the Kidron, the whole wide expanse of hillside on your left is paved with grave-stones. Down this path came our Lord accompanied by the crowd of palm-branch bearers. At the foot, on your right, is the little square enclosure, the Garden of Gethsemane, with its funereal cypress trees. At its farther corner the road widens, having blended with the other paths that here come, one of them almost perpendicularly, down the face of Olivet.

"Look," says Jonathan. And sure enough here comes the Arab girl, old acquaintance of both of you. She usually leads about her blind father, whose orbless face is a sad and terrible contrast to her own. Tall, it is her wont to walk smartly; and the poor father is dragged along, a veritable "tatie-bogle." Husnai is the name Jonathan has given her: the word is Arabic and signifies "most beautiful." At this moment she stands on the roadside, her back to the west wall of Gethsemane, awaiting your approach. Her quick eye had caught sight of you, and she had set down her father on the footpath of the bridge that crosses the Kidron, and come thus far, a minute's walk, to be in quiet waiting for you, away from

the clamouring of the numerous beggars that sit about the bridge. Jonathan is feeling in his pocket for a big silver coin. The Arab knows she will get one : and meanwhile she stands smiling, a statue in rags, work of a master hand, her head and shoulders draped with a spotlessly white kerchief of thinnest stuff.

It would be on this bridge that our Lord encountered the blind man whom He sent to the Pool of Siloam—a ten minutes' walk down the glen.

Across the low bridge, you ride forward a few paces to the spot where they say Stephen was stoned. Had you been on foot you would have ascended the steep path that here leads up to the Stephen Gate, and so made your way through the city to the hotel at the farther side. As it is, you take the road to the right. This slopes northwards up the side of Bezetha, and surmounts the heights near by the north-east corner of the city wall. From this point your road lies west, along the north side of the city—outside the wall, of course. Half-way along, the Damascus Gate invites you to go in ; but you push on, across the level road that here enters Jerusalem from the north—passing a small suburb on your right—and up towards the north-west corner of the walls. The Russian pilgrim barracks rise prominently on your right, on the high ground close by, as you near the corner—about here stood Psephinus, lofty watch-tower, between which and Hippicus the wall formed a crescent, Hezekiah's pool and Calvary no doubt excluded in the concave. Over the height, you turn south, to the left, and are soon in the busy thoroughfare : this is the Jaffa road. Down by the west wall a couple of hundred yards, buildings on either side of the road, and you reach the Jaffa Gate. A few paces more, and you pull up in front of the little store from which you started. You left Jericho at seven in the morning : it is now well on in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XII.

NORTH.

TO-NIGHT an unusual stir goes humming all over the hotel: to-morrow morning you start by road for Damascus. Five others, one of them a lady, are to be your fellow-travellers. The lady's riding-habits—she has had a couple made at the store below—have just been sent in, and she is all excitement, of course, at the thought of being about a whole fortnight in the saddle. The dragoman has arrived from Jaffa, and sits in the quadrangle or court, with the landlord, at a small table set against the north wall; and the lamp beside them is burning its brightest. There is much examining of papers, folding them up, and replacing them in a large pocket-book: these are the teskeres, or firmans, of the several members of the party, and such documents as shall be required of the dragoman on arriving at the hotel at Damascus.

You have been out for a farewell stroll through the city, and come in to find all this stir going on. You are introduced to the dragoman: Joseph is his name. He looks a very capable man: of a powerful build, shaved all but a heavy black moustache, weather beaten, and of a Roman cast of face, he quite wins your confidence. On the table lies a formidable whip. Joseph wears riding-boots of strong leather, and a dark grey Western suit, with pea-jacket and large black horn buttons. His head-dress is the usual black silk kerchief, held on the head by a double coil of hair-rope, and drooping over neck and shoulders.

Joseph offers to undertake the custody of your *teskere*. Unhappily you had never thought of procuring one. To be sure, you had seen and read the notice posted up on the drawing-room door to the effect that travellers bound for the interior of the Turkish dominions were required to provide themselves with those documents; but it had never occurred to your dull intellect that in journeying to Damascus you would be perceptibly farther into the interior than you had been when at the Jordan. And now it is too late. Nor will there be time to procure one in the morning. You must go without it, and take your chance of arrest and imprisonment; or, rather—to put it practically—having to pay a shilling or two in what they will dignify by the name of fine, but which would be more correctly designated blackmail. So men say.

Jonathan, who knows the journey, advises you to be careful in your selection of a horse in the morning, as each sticks to his own beast all the way, and the pleasure of the expedition might be marred by an unsuitable mount.

Away to bed early, to make sure of one good night's sleep, lest the tent life be unpleasantly wakeful. In these parts you are little troubled with dreams: so much in the open air, and so early astir, you sleep like a log. All thoughts of the wanted *teskere*, all sentimental regrets at parting from these holy places probably for ever, all the excitement of setting out as if in quest of adventures—all these things are forgot, and you are in the peaceful land of nod.

The morning breaks—beautiful: the excitement of the previous evening again lays hold on you. There is the gathering up of odds and ends; the turning over of the baggage; the trying of straps; the feeling of pockets; and finally the depositing, in the middle of the floor, of the articles of voyage which are to be handed over to native care. Jonathan comes toiling up the outside stone

stair, in breathless haste, to tell you that the horses are tied in line, and that from the balcony in front of the drawing-room he has heard your name mentioned twice or thrice: you had better step across and ascertain whether you are wanted, or, at any rate, whether you may not select your beast.

Outside, there is much stir: many natives are hanging about, and all Cook's staff are bustling to and fro. You learn that such and such a horse, a brown animal of middle size and good figure, is intended for you: you are the lightest of the party, and this the smallest beast. In a few minutes the start will be made. Jonathan examines your saddle, walks round the horse, lifts a hoof, and winds up with pulling the tail; which done, he turns to you with the comforting observation that he thinks you have no reason to be dissatisfied. From this moment you begin to be deeply attached to your beast: it is more to you than are all the people of the party. A little more bustling about, during which the horses are led outside the gate; a good deal of hand-shaking, with the hotel people and sundry others you have become acquainted with during your stay; a final inquiry as to whether all your things are stowed away; and you pass out through the gateway for the last time. The fruit-sellers are squatted as usual; there is the customary stream of people filling up the street; the Turkish guard stands sulkily leaning on his gun in the porch; and the lame beggar is here to wave you a final adieu.

Outside, there seems to be a special bustle: the horses are hardly discernible in the crowd. That a start has actually been made you perceive: the lady of the party is riding ahead—at a walking pace, of course. Another shake of the hand, and you have bid Jonathan farewell. He in a few weeks goes to Paris on his way to New York: you will never meet again. But never can you forget the interesting strolls you had together around the city, the

explorations in a manner, the daring intrusions into all sorts of places. Jonathan! farewell!

A measure of sadness, like a cloud or mist, overhangs at least yourself as you ride quietly up the Jaffa road. So attached have you got to the place, despite its chronic thirst, and all its abiding filth, that you almost envy those masons chipping away at the stones which lie out right into the middle of the road, and past which you have to guide your horse with some care. Each house, on either hand, is familiar to you: to ride past, and look on them for the last time, is like parting with friends. There, on your right, with its back to the city wall, is the consul's office, up a stair, and having as frontage and promenade the flat roof of the lower building. Here on the left is the booth of Othman; and here he comes himself, laughing as usual. This funny fellow keeps horses and conveyances for hire: it was his carriage you had the day you went to Hebron. How he would laugh when Jonathan pretended to feel about for the hole torn in his trousers by a nail in the cushion of one of Othman's conveyances! Othman is probably the ugliest man you have seen in these parts—which is saying a good deal. And he seems to be aware of his plainness; for, as if by way of setting beauty at defiance, and taking a pride in accentuating his ugliness, he disfigures his forehead with two rows of perpendicular cuts, each cut being about half an inch long. As soon as these have healed up, he re-cuts. This morning they look very raw: he must have been at the horrid work only last night. Big-mouthed, broad-faced, brown if not black, pock-pitted, and thus gashed, he is rather repulsive at first sight; but on closer acquaintance he turns out a very good fellow, honest, and possessed of a genuine conscience: you wave a farewell to him with real sadness.

Up this steep road a little way, and you strike off to the right: this is the north-west angle of the city wall;

and down here, by the back of the city, lies your route : you are making for the road that runs right north from the Damascus Gate. On the high ground, to your left, the Russian buildings, in all their magnitude—and they are a striking feature in the landscape—seem to have gathered to the spot where they knew you must pass, to say good-bye. Lower, opposite the Damascus Gate, the small suburb seems to be modestly waiting your approach, to take a last look at you before you have disappeared for ever. You make direct for this suburb by a slanting path, striking the main road just beyond, at about the Tombs of the Kings. There stands the very child that brought you the candles when Jonathan and you came out here to explore : she is looking out, no doubt, for travellers, though these are but few. She is guarding the big wooden gate on the right side of the road ; and within stands the cottage where her mother lives, keeper of the place. You can see down almost as far as to the quarry-like reservoir, off which to the left are these spacious rock tombs. You think once more of the round, grindstone-like stone, that was “rolled” by way of closing the entrance to those dark chambers, specimens of which are to be seen here in perfection.

A little farther on, and you descend into the upper reaches of the Kidron Valley, which here winds westward—or rather comes from the west. The region is desolate ; and the bouldered slopes on your left contain, as already stated, many rock tombs. You recall the afternoon you wandered here, twisting your ankles, in search of the Tombs of the Judges.

Ascending the northern bank of the valley, you are now on Mount Scopus, from whose stony heights you take your last look at the holy city. Proceeding, you traverse a dreary country : the road, if such it can be called, winds round the foot of a hill here and another there, and up a bit of plain, and so on. On this small hill to the right

stood Gibeah of Benjamin—so it is supposed. Half an hour farther on, and you reach the base of the hill on which Ramah stood. Another hour, and you pass, on your left, Ataroth-Addar, “the border,” according to Joshua, “of Ephraim eastward.” It is a wretched village. Here you have another parting scene: a lady from the hotel has ridden thus far, attended by a native youth, by way of escorting the lady of your party, and at the same time journeying to Ramallah, a village near by. It is here that the roads divide: yours lies due north; that to Ramallah westward. The lady is interested in the mission there.

A little farther on, still among stony glens, and around bare hills, you meet with the missionary of Ramallah. This man you had seen in Jerusalem. To-day he rides a handsome horse, an Arab, the gift of the sheik; and he gallops as if fleeing from the prairie fire.

Half an hour, and, sloping south, lies El Bireh, doubtless the ancient Beeroth. It takes its name from a spring on its south-west—bireh meaning well or cistern. By this spring are the ruins of a khan; and, in the village, of a Christian church. Tradition makes El Bireh the place where Joseph and Mary missed the holy child. Here the water-bottles are filled. In another hour, through stony ups and downs, you reach Bethel, on a hill, facing the south. It consists of hovels and rudely walled gardens; and below it, in the hollow, is a pond, supplied by a spring. This you have looked forward to reaching: the dragoman has held out delightful hopes of your at length being rewarded for the thirsty days and nights spent at Jerusalem: you are to drink your fill of crystal water. Riding down to the right into this hollow, you hastily dismount, and seek the promised spring. It lies on the north edge of this pond-looking place; and you have to wade through semi-dried mud to reach it. When reached it is not inviting: two or three untidy women are seated

around it belabouring clothes with stones : it is evidently the wash-house of the village. Joseph, poor fellow, seems hurt at your lack of appreciation ; and he points out, what is no doubt the fact, that the spring enters the long stone basin at the west end, while the washerwomen are located round the bottom or outlet ; but you have no palate for it. He and the two attendants dip their tin mugs and drink, in scorn of all your silly scruples.

Luncheon is laid out, on the ground, at the south side of the dried-up pond. There is a nice white tablecloth ; and you have a few hearth-rugs on which to recline around the cloth. Each of you is furnished with a tin tumbler for water. You help yourselves to cold cut-up chicken, or hard-boiled eggs, or both ; and the repast is wound up with an orange or a few figs. Bread of course there is plenty : it is good, too, because fresh : as time goes on, it will be less fresh ; for it must last till you reach Damascus.

The whole village seems to have turned out, to look : there they sit, men, women and children, in a prolonged group, between you and the well—that is, in the mud. They are evidently greatly interested : their black eyes are open to the full width ; and they keep wonderful silence—for them. Who, or what, is this old man who draws near, as if he wished to say something ? He looks half-witted. And yet there is something venerable about those long white locks : you find yourself going back into the days of old, and dwelling on the doings and misdoings of father Jacob, who when a young man slept just somewhere about here—most probably just here, for the well would attract him—with one of those eternal stones which are your bane for his pillow. This harmless oddity whose venerable appearance recalls the patriarch is the doctor of the village. Manifestly imbecile, he is yet filled with a sense of supreme elevation above the common herd : you would say vanity was his monomania. Claim to

medical knowledge he has none. The waiter however—for the dragoman scorns to take part in such nonsense—goes through the farce of presenting each of you in turn to the mild old man. You shake hands with him—not quite the correct thing, orientally. He overlooks the irregularity, probably on the ground that you cannot be supposed to know any better. At the instance of some mischievous member of the party the doctor is questioned as to what books he has read bearing on his profession. In reply he retires into the village, returning presently with what proved to be a copy of the New Testament in Russian, and a fragment of a note-book written in pencil. The poor man has no notion what it is he is showing you: he does not know a single letter.

As a set-off to such inane work the dragoman—always ready, apparently, and full of anecdote—narrates how on a certain occasion a doctor who was being interrogated in what seemed to his conscious merit a somewhat derogatory fashion, replied to the inquiry as to where he had studied, “You ask me where I have studied: ask me rather what medical men I have instructed.” And in answer to the further inquiry as to what books he had read, “Ask me,” says he, “not what books I have read, but what works I have written.” With diversions of this kind your incipient aches and pains are forgot, and the lunch proceeds, though you still refuse to be coaxed into drinking the water of the filthy pool. As for the camp attendants they consider it excellent, and partake copiously thereof, a fact which rather shakes, if it does not indeed shatter to pieces, and grind small as the dust of the balance, any confidence you ever had in the discrimination of those functionaries, and inspires you with a troubled dread that the store they carry may have been drawn from some dreadful hole: they said they filled the bottles at El Bireh, but from what sort of well?

Lunch over, the lady of the party discovers to her dismay

that she has left a ring behind in the hotel at Jerusalem : it is what was her engagement ring, and she would not lose it for the world. The dragoman, man of infinite resource, at once resolves that two of the Bethel peasants shall be despatched to the holy city with a letter containing details and suggesting the course to be pursued in the event of the missing article being found : it is to be forwarded by post to Beyrout, and what not. The lady's husband would have recourse to the telegraph ; but there is no telegraph station nearer than Shechem—which will not be reached till to-morrow evening. The letter, written in pencil, is soon in readiness. The couple of peasants selected for the mission have gone into the village to prepare for the journey. Here they come, each armed with the customary long single-barrelled gun slung across the back. They stickle for a trifle more than had been offered ; and they positively insist upon having a third man added to the party, for safety. These matters settled, the three start forthwith, undertaking to appear in camp to-morrow morning by sunrise. That is to say, they have to walk ten miles to Jerusalem, ten back to Bethel, another ten to Sinjil where you are to encamp to-night, and finally back home to Bethel—forty miles in all. For this the remuneration is to be a trifle over a shilling each : surely time must hang heavy on the hands of these villagers : labour here must be cheap.

Resuming your journey, all the better for the fortification of the inner man, but also all the stiffer, as you find on remounting your beast, you plod northward. The road lies along the top of a range of hills. Down into the valley again, you begin to realize that you are now in more fertile regions : these are fig orchards on your right ; vines too are here ; and as for the olive it is everywhere about, and seems well tended. The villages are more picturesque than those of Judea : that one on the hill over to the left, though it has a northern exposure, is lovely to look upon :

its domes rise as if proudly commanding the notice of the passer-by ; and its stillness offers peace and rest—a paradise for the worn and worried Western, if he could come so far. The inhabitants of those villages are the tillers of the soil : as in Egypt, they congregate in villages, instead of living in scattered crofter huts.

But what a road this is ! You are constantly compelled to leave it, and take the liberty of riding over the low stone-fence into the olive orchard on the slope alongside. To your surprise you ride out into a well-wooded flat where, crossing a valley that runs east and west, you continue northwards. The road to the left would take you to Jaffa. By and by the Robbers' Spring is reached. This is a lonely spot. There appears to have been an artificial pond here ; there are also the ruins of a khan. On the left are perpendicular cliffs. The place is shut in, and suggestive of murder. You dismount nevertheless, and wander over the grass-grown elevated floor—a perfect green for tennis, did the demons that come here at night care to play in the moonlight.

Mounting again, you ride still north. It is well it is yet daylight, for the road in the floor of this valley has got washed away : it is but the torrent bed. You are fain to seek a passage somewhere on the slope : it would be a serious matter to tumble into any of those holes : that one, by the back of that boulder, is six or eight feet deep. This is a dreadful getting down stairs : holes and boulders, boulders and holes : nature surely never meant this glen to be traversed.

But this long lane, if it has no turning, gets down into the flat in course of time : you feel as if you were a torrent that had long been leaping and foaming, and has at length attained to rest in the lazy plain. A genuine plain lies not far off in front. By the time you ride out of this glen however, and up the hill to the left, leaving the plain to the right, the shades of the evening are gathering

about you : you are thankful enough to see the tents of your camp on a level bit of the hill, above Sinjil.

You are curious to know the extent of the camp. For a party of six, you discover, there are three sleeping tents—not tents asleep, but tents for sleeping in—a dining tent, and one answering the purpose of a kitchen. The animals comprise four donkeys, seven mules, and nine horses. The attendants and yourselves number sixteen souls, all told.

The cook has been busy, for you have but a very little while to wait for dinner. The soup is delicious, and most refreshing. The chickens—brought into camp by the villagers—are all that could be desired. The meagre light of a couple of common candles seems but to draw tighter the cords of companionship. Underneath your feet is a piece of carpet, which keeps you off the grass and weeds. Your chair is a backless camp-stool, but a happy exchange for the saddle. You begin to feel aches and pains which in the morning you had not thought of: the excitement of setting out, and the ungalled condition of limb in which you rejoiced prior to having ventured on horseback, defied the inroads of trouble for a little while; but the jolting in the saddle caused by the roughness of the road, the descending among stones great and small where no path could be discerned, the clambering up hill-sides, and the shocks produced by the stumblings of your horse—for these trusty animals, though wonderfully sure-footed, do sometimes make mistakes—these things at work for a few hours, you began to feel somewhat less comfortable than at the start. Long before mid-day you had begun to wonder whether the lunching place would ever be reached; and you had timidly inquired of the dragoman—for you shrank from divulging to him your unhappy condition—how far he thought it would be. Your heart sank at the reply “about an hour from here.” Glancing hopelessly over the foreground, you dropped into a melan-

choly indifference. Still the pains kept threatening, and each fresh jolt gave them more reality. And you wonder now, as then, how if these things are so during the first day's ride, you are to stand it for many days. Truly the camp-stool, albeit by no means an easy chair, is a happy exchange.

Dinner ended, the dragoman enters the tent, seating himself on the monster wooden trunk which contains the plate and the plates. A wonderful arrangement is the interior of this box: each dish has a compartment for itself; and let the mule dance ever so gaily—which it is hardly likely to do, with such a burden on one side of its back balanced by about an equal weight on the other—the contents are perfectly safe. It is hence that the wines are produced—you were requested to order what, in that line, you wished to take with you on the journey: they would have put it in at Jerusalem.

Announcing the programme for the morrow, Joseph assumes the bearing of a field-marshal on the eve of a decisive engagement: "Up at five," he says; "breakfast at half-past five; horses at six." In prospect of this early rising, no less than in view of the fatigues of body resulting from the day's journey accomplished, you resolve to retire early. The hubbub outside, however, tempts you to have a look around first. Going out from the candle-light you are rather helpless for a little: the novelty of tent-ropes all about is also slightly embarrassing, for scarcely have you progressed three steps when you find yourself tripped up by a string: happily the beasts are a yard or two off, otherwise you might have been sprawling and tumbling over their outstretched legs, and getting yourself unmercifully kicked.

No tent for the beasts: their stable is the starry-kirtled night. Horses, mules, donkeys, all in good fellowship, their quarrels forgot, creep near each other for warmth. Like Napoleon's "square," their heads all inward how-

ever, and their tails to the foe, they are tied to the four ropes that are pinned into the ground enclosing a space where the grooms lie, as also the provender.

You wander about the outskirts of the camp, now looking into the kitchen, now straining your eyes to make out the outlines of the recumbent beasts, now gazing down towards the village which lies but a few paces below ; and you get startled to find a man standing silently by the back of a tent : at your side, you fail to notice his presence till you have come into collision with him. He is one of your own men, watching against the stealthy incursions of any loose-principled villager. It is a cold and cheerless night, and you think it better to turn in. One or two are still in the dining tent : the other one or two have retired apparently for the night. The waiter, however, comes bustling in, rattling teacups, and announces that tea will be ready in a little. The prospect of warm tea cheers you considerably, and the night begins to grow young again. By the time you retire, it is not so very early after all : tent life can be fairly sociable : your companions and you are beginning to get acquainted with each other.

Each of the three sleeping tents contains two iron bedsteads, one on either side the tent. A rug is spread before each bed ; and the tent-pole in the middle is furnished with hooks whereon to hang your clothes. A trestle table placed across between the two bed-heads serves to lay little articles upon, such as brushes and combs ; it is also your wash-stand, a tin basin and jug for each making up the sum of your bedroom furniture. Those little iron bedsteads are positive marvels of ingenuity : they look wonderfully comfortable, and can be packed into almost nothingness. You want hardly any mattress : a blanket or two, on the canvas bottom that is laced to the iron frame all round, is sufficient. For the accommodation of the pillow there is a sloped arrangement of iron-work most effective.

Undressing here is a novel sensation : the small stones lying about under the rug give a queer feeling to your barefooted tread ; and when your toes chance to get beyond the carpet and touch the cold grass and weeds that are standing erect under the bed, you start and shiver. It is hardly to be expected that a perfectly level space can be found for each bed : you have therefore to experiment with what bits of stone you can find, and try to level up any lacking corner of your couch ; and you need not be greatly alarmed if on getting into bed the little iron leg you have so carefully propped slips from its perch : you find it is not absolutely necessary after all to lie quite on the level : so long as the whole thing stops short of capsizing, you are thankful, and learn to be content. So grateful indeed is the rest to your tired limbs that you, even you, one of the most timid and imaginative of beings, who at home would have been a prey to the horrible fear of a highway being formed for all sorts of creeping things by the dipping bedclothes, which you know are touching the ground, literally, on the one side or the other : even you say to yourself, "Never mind." And when your knees get upon the iron rod, or out over it, you never once think of grumbling at the narrowness of the bed : it is narrow because it is precious. The tongues of the attendants are busy outside, and the wind sways the tent to and fro ; but these things are powerless to retard your slumbers : gathering yourself together, and pulling the clothes over your head, you are prepared to vie with the seven sleepers.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO SHECHEM.

YOU have slept well, and could have put off the awakening for another hour, had you been allowed; but the waiters have waked you up, and that in a novel fashion: they are marching round the tents, one of them beating a pair of dish-covers like cymbals, the other ringing a bell. They do it rather artistically, considering the materials they have to work with: indeed they manage to impart to the sounds a measure of articulate speech: it runs in two lines, thus,

“One and, two and, three, four, five, six,
One and, two and, three, four, five,” and so on.

The first inquiry naturally has reference to the weather: is it fair? For a rainy day would be calamitous. Assured on this point, you hasten your toilet, urged thereto no less by the absence of a bath and looking-glass, backed up by the presence of partial darkness, than by the dread of the tent being lowered about your ears: you have heard of such things.

Stepping out into the grey morning you salute the attendants, glance over the beasts, singling out your own horse Zaid, and, sweeping the horizon, make for the breakfast tent. Here the lady of the party is already seated, waiting for the tea. She greets you with a hearty good morning; and proceeds to narrate how, after retiring

to her tent last night, she had discovered the missing ring: it was found sticking in a straw hat. She is jubilant over the recovery of what she had thought lost; but neither has she been forgetful of the weary miles the peasants of Bethel have wandered in the night, and are now wandering, you both wonder where.

Breakfast is scarcely over, when lo, as the first darts of gold shoot from the east, true to their bargain the messengers appear. There they stand, guns across their backs, and a look about their faces as if they belonged to another world: sensation in the camp: not one but pales, and tries to hide the tear. Since noon yesterday those poor fellows have been tramping that dreadful road—they could not do much more than two miles an hour in daylight even, and how they managed at all to get through that glen in the dark where the torrent-bed had been scooped into chasms is a mystery: you cannot solve it. One of the three holds a letter: its contents are now unimportant. It tells, however, how a hurried search had been instituted in the hotel, unsuccessfully; but that it would be resumed and carried on more minutely. The weary trio receive their pay, and something into the bargain, which brings the smile to their broad brown faces. They are regaled with food moreover, and sent away rejoicing.

Meanwhile the camp has been falling to pieces: things are done expeditiously. A few of the villagers have come up, and are gaping at the strangers, and at the marvels of packing—everything has its own place, and the attendants are so familiar with the whole thing that they set about their work as if doing it for a wager. Some of the spectators have come not to see but to beg: that blind old man in tatters has no doubt calculated upon pocketing a coin or two. There he stands, right in the middle of operations. How he has got there, and how he is going to get out again, are questions too subtle for your inex-

perience. You give them up, and him too: for it would manifestly be a work of time to get him to comprehend that a coin was being offered him. But Ahmed the waiter cuts the knot: hurrying along, the beggar blocking the way, he gives him such a knock that the poor old man faces quite about. Never did recruit on parade-ground left-face with such agility. After this experience he evidently deems it safer to be at a distance, and he makes off forthwith.

Mounting, you ride away, led by the dragoman: the baggage contingent will follow.

Sinjl, where you have spent the night, lies on the north slope of the hill, near its summit. Riding down the east side of the hill you soon reach a plain which, beginning here, extends eastward. You are now close by Seilun, the Shiloh of Scripture. Quite a rush of memories fill your mind as you think of Shiloh: here the land was divided, and the tabernacle set up; here were held, too, in the days of the Judges, the yearly dances in which the maidens of the place figured; here dwelt Eli, the child Samuel under his care; here the ark was kept; from hence it was taken to the war against the Philistines—never to return.

To-night you will sleep at Nabulus or Shechem: your route therefore lies almost direct north. Leaving Seilun on the right, you seek a passage through glen after glen until you reach the plain of Makhna which sweeps northward, the mountains of Samaria skirting its west side. Before reaching this long plain, you have had some rough riding: the road has been now up, until the mountain has barred the way; again down by a somewhat precipitous path until the bottom of the next glen has been reached. By the time you have made the last descent, and are at length treading the plain of Makhna, you are ready to appreciate the comforts of journeying on the level—you have encountered worse elsewhere, but it is the thought

that this journey must go on from day to day that troubles you. However, down into the plain of Makhna, no more quarry faces to descend, the road to Jacob's Well is a soft path, on cultivated land, the region of stones for the present having been left behind. Riding along on the sloping side of the plain, you pass an occasional village, down from which the peasantry are coming to their labours in the fields below; here are cattle drinking at a well; here again is a long stretch of arable land, apparently neglected, but no doubt waiting to be tilled at the proper time. Now you hasten on: the path is still on the west slope, just on the edge of the plain. This has been a long and tough ride: the hour of lunch is supposed to be twelve, or thereabout; but to-day you have pushed forward, staving off luncheon time, desirous to defer that meal until you take it at Jacob's Well. You are decidedly getting limp and undone: men and beasts have both had about enough of it: but happily your destination is at hand—so they say. You come upon the spot indeed unawares after all: here at your left hand, a valley runs up west; a few paces forward and you dismount at a door in a wall. This wall encloses a considerable bit of ground, in the middle of which is Jacob's Well.

Leading the horses in, you turn them loose to pick up any grass they can find. As for yourselves you gather round the sacred spot, eager to see the well, forgetful of lunch, hungry though you are. It is disappointing, in a way. The well itself, if it contained any water—which it does not—would be just such as one had expected: it is deep; and you would want appliances wherewith to "draw"—as the Samaritan woman expressed it. And to-day there are numbers of women working in the fields a couple of hundred paces off, any one of whom might easily pass for the one who came here with her pitcher to draw. They are looking at you and your comrades. Picturesque figures they are, too: the bright colours of their

dressess are a pleasant contrast to the everlasting blue worn by the peasant women in the hill country of Judea, and indeed by the Muslim women—and men as well—everywhere. These are a different race of women: their complexions are in keeping with their brilliant dresses, and quite foreign to the prevailing sallow of the Arab. You are amazed to see such field-workers. How do they manage to keep their clothes so apparently unsoiled? How also are the pink and white preserved without recourse being had to the Western device of stupendous sun-shades? Field-workers they are, and no mistake; but they look more like a pic-nic party, trying their hand, in fun, at the hoe.

Jacob's Well is a deep draw-well. It is covered with a stone of the dimensions of a cart-wheel; and the round hole in the centre is just large enough to admit of a moderate-sized pitcher being let through it. In order to get to the well's mouth you find you have to climb a rubbish mound. Once on the top of this, you perceive that the well is surrounded by a building, and has at one time been covered over by groined work like a church roof. This roof has fallen in; the fallen material has been thrown out off the well top; and the only approach is over the rubbish: you jump down into what is a kind of well around the well.

A heavy boulder lies on the hole. This you roll off, and then peer into the depths. It seems very deep. There being no water in it, however, you can discern nothing: all is blackness. Searching about for a pebble, you drop it in, and listen for its fall. The depth, they tell you, is now only about seventy-five feet: if every pilgrim drop in a pebble or two, as you have so innocently done, no wonder the well grows less and less deep, and has ceased to contain water.

A strong stream of water flows past, a short way off: down in the hollow by the north side of the enclosure in

which you are located is a little mill. The stream drives it. After the manner of Oriental mills, the water is led in a raised channel till it reaches the mill: it then pours right down, as into a chimney, and strikes upon the wheel. So charmed are you with the presence of running water, after the dry and parched land you have come from, that you play like a child by the side of this tiny torrent. You stoop, and dip your hands in the swift current: you step across: you venture out as near as may be to the chimney hole down which the whole thing disappears. The lunching party care not for such trifles: you have come out here alone. Nor do they care to accompany you to Joseph's tomb, close by. Beyond the stream you find yourself in a small field. Crossing this you enter the precincts of the whitewashed wely. The building has no pretensions to elegance: it is simply a roofless enclosure, built over the spot where Joseph's bones are laid. In the Book of Joshua it is written, "The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought." No doubt the well took its name from the fact that it was in the portion of ground bought by Jacob. In the building you surprise some women and children: they hasten forth, leaving you alone with Joseph.

Through the bushes, and once more into the little field, you wend your way back to the stream. A curious object arrests your attention when about to leave the field: a tortoise, of middle size, lies quietly in the shallow furrow. Your first impulse is to capture it. On second thoughts, however, you let it alone. You learn from the dragoman that there are many about, and that they are useful to the husbandman.

Leaving Jacob's Well, you mount at the door in the wall, and proceed to ride up the valley. Your route now lies direct west, and up. On either side the valley rise really imposing mountains, Gerizim on the south, and

Ebal on the north. These are not solitary hills, but ranges. As you ascend the glen, these ranges keep rising higher also; and when you shall have reached Shechem at the summit of the pass you will find that there the cliffs, on either side, are at their highest. You go up the stream all the way: they tell you it flows from the town.

Immediately above Joseph's tomb, by the side of the stream, lies a wretched village. Passing this on your right hand, you are fairly into the glen. It is but a quarter of an hour's journey now to Shechem. Riding forward into the olive thicket which here confronts you, you are surprised to come all of a sudden upon rather extensive barracks. Whether or not the approach of your cavalcade has anything to do with it you do not know, but sure enough your appearance is greeted with trumpet blare. The place is alive with Turkish soldiery. Leaving this ants' hill on your left, you ride forward a little way through the grand olive forest, in which are many women and children, the former enveloped in the ugly white sheet: your camp is awaiting you, just outside the town, on the right hand of the gate, and on the edge of the cemetery which, beginning here, stretches along the lower slopes of Ebal, all the length of the town.

So imposing are the surroundings of Shechem that it takes some time before you can drag yourself into the tent, tired though you are: it is as if you could never look and wonder enough. This is glorious scenery: the parallel beetling cliffs on north and south seem to subdue the light, and spread awe over the place: you expect it to thunder here always: the landscape is heavenward.

And how singular that that stream which comes tearing down the middle of Gerizim, just at the back of the town, should on entering the town divide and become two streams, the one descending westwards and finding its way to the Mediterranean, the other, the one you have come up, making for the Jordan!

It is still early—only about mid-afternoon : you contemplate an incursion therefore into the town, to make acquaintance with the run of the streets, so that if necessary you may be able to find your way about later on. First of all, however, while waiting for the dragoman who is meanwhile engaged in superintending sundry operations concerning the camp, you put on a pair of slippers and take a solitary stroll through the cemetery. This, like all the rest of these Oriental cemeteries, is quite unenclosed, and shows the usual long mounds of earth and stone. A number of people are hanging about : this is one of the popular resorts evidently, second only to the olive grove between the town and the barracks.

Passing out of the cemetery, you climb some rubbish hillocks that lie along the north side of the town, in order to have a general view of Shechem, and especially to see what sort of place it looks, on the west side. You are aware of being dogged by a youth who seems desirous to speak but lacks the courage : he has followed you all the way along the cemetery slopes ; and now as you go up one hillock and down another and finally ascend to the top of the westernmost, he is at your shoulder, and you feel he is bound to speak. Evidently summoning all his courage he steps to the front, and with outstretched arm points to Gerizim, naming the mountain. Having had experience of such characters, and knowing how impudent they are wont to wax eventually, you are disposed to cut this youth's story short : to this end you take not the slightest notice of his presence : to all intents and purposes, you are as one deaf and blind. He takes the hint, and leaves you to yourself. Now you can peacefully survey the scene. What a number of handsome houses ! And how elegant and dignified they look, yellowish white, with their mountain background of black ! Immediately below where you stand are bits of back-garden, attached to houses ; and beyond these are groups of gardens, well-hedged, and

teeming with vegetation, the result of the abundant supply of water which seems bubbling and trickling everywhere throughout them : the place is a green bog. And farther down the glen, the verdure, though not so excessively rich as in these gardens, is yet refreshing to the eye.

From this slipshod tour of discovery you have ascertained that Shechem lies partly on the lower slope of Gerizim, partly in the flat bed of the valley : none of it lies on the Ebal or north side : as for that, it is devoted to the cemetery exclusively.

The modern name of Shechem is Nabulus or Nablus. This is an Arabic imitation of Neapolis. The place was restored by Titus Flavius Vespasian, and from him took the name of Flavia Neapolis, or simply Neapolis—that is, new town. Its ancient name, and that by which it is designated in the Bible, was Shechem, which means “the back” or rather “shoulder”—a most appropriate title, for it is situated exactly on the ridge or shoulder of the valley: it is a steep descent down the valley, whether towards the east or the west.

History does not give the Samaritans a good character. It is told of them that when Alexander the Great had settled matters at Jerusalem, and was preparing to depart, the Samaritans, called also Shechemites, learning how greatly the Jews had been honoured by the monarch, resolved to go south and present themselves as Hebrews. It was their way, when they saw the Jews in adversity, as they often were, and have often since been, to repudiate kinship ; but when they perceived that some good fortune had befallen the Jews, they would immediately pretend to have communion with them, saying that they belonged to them, and claiming descent from Joseph, through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. On this occasion they invited Alexander to visit Shechem. He put them off, however, saying he would come the next time. They proceeded to

beg the remission of the seventh years' tribute, alleging that they did not sow on those years. This brought Alexander to inquire sharply who they were who thus observed a Jewish custom. Pressed, they were forced to admit that they were not Jews, but Sidonians, living at Shechem—a second falsehood. Alexander replied that it was to the Jews he had granted the privilege in question; but that on further inquiry he would make up his mind. After Alexander's death, and the partition of his empire, the temple on Mount Gerizim, rebuilt in his time, but dating from about the year 420 B.C., remained; and it became customary among the more worthless—or, say, less worthy—Jews for any of them who was accused by the Jerusalem authorities of eating things common, or breaking the Sabbath, or of any other similar crime, to go over to the Shechemites, declaring he had been accused unjustly.

That was an interesting dispute that took place at Alexandria in the time of Ptolemy Philometer, between the Jews and the Samaritans, though modern notions of justice would hardly have been satisfied with the verdict. The question was debated before Ptolemy himself, the Jews advancing the proposition that, according to the law of Moses, the temple was to be built at Jerusalem, the Samaritans on the other hand contending that Gerizim was the place. And it was a serious dispute; for both sides concurred in the demand that the defeated advocates should be put to death. Two speakers were appointed for either side. The Jerusalem cause was first pleaded. The argument, briefly stated, was drawn from the fact that the high priests, in direct succession, had ruled over the temple at Jerusalem, but never had anything to do with that on Gerizim—an argument, as has been pointed out, that proves nothing at all as to the rightness or wrongness of placing the temple at Jerusalem, only that that was the more ancient of the two. The Samaritan advocates were put to death.

To the Christian it is interesting to reflect that here, at Shechem, is the spot where Abraham first built an altar: we read that Abram, on his journey from Haran, passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh; and the Canaanite was then in the land. From this spot he journeyed south, after building an altar. Shechem, therefore, has the distinction of being the most ancient sacred place mentioned in Hebrew history.

Later on, Jacob came to the city of Shechem on his return from Padan-aram. And he bought the parcel of ground whereon his tent was pitched.

After the Exodus, Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal, as Moses had commanded. And all Israel stood here ranged on either side the ark, half of them in front of Gerizim, and half in front of Ebal. And he here read the law, the blessing and the curse. Going back to Deuteronomy, you read, "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt set the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal." There was as yet no thought of Jerusalem: this was a point in the Samaritans' favour, had they been permitted by Ptolemy to finish their case.

Here, as already said, Joseph sleeps. And Joshua, towards the end of his days, made a covenant with the people, setting them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. He took a great stone, and set it up here, under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

In the time of the Judges, we read that the men of Shechem assembled themselves and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem—the identical oak and pillar of Joshua, no doubt. Here, later, the ten tribes revolted, and made Rehoboam king. And in New Testament times our Lord sat down to rest by Jacob's well; when the woman of Samaria started the Gerizim question.

A further point that might have been advanced in favour of Gerizim is that, among the ruins of the temple that once stood here, or at all events somewhere near its site, are some large roughly-hewn stones—that is, if the stones were here then. They are ten in number; and the Samaritans allege that these are the very stones which, by Joshua's orders, were brought out of Jordan and built into an altar at Gilgal, on the entrance of the people into the land. Those stones, we know, were twelve; but it is not difficult to account for the limitation to the lesser number.

These people put in a claim for the recognition of Gerizim as the mountain whereon Abraham sacrificed the ram. So Jews, Samaritans, Muslims, each have a sacred mountain on which that sacrifice was offered.

The Samaritans, like the Jews, keep the Passover. Encamping on Gerizim, they kill the necessary lambs, and, roasting them, eat the flesh about midnight, shod, girded, and with staves in their hands. Gerizim and Ebal rise both of them to a height of over a thousand feet above Shechem, well nigh perpendicularly.

Most Bible readers have but a confused notion of what is embraced in the name Samaria. That there was a city called Samaria they know; but they are not a little puzzled when they read that a woman of Samaria came to Jacob's Well to draw water, and that her home was not in Samaria city but here in Shechem.

Samaria city, according to First Kings, was built originally by Omri, king of Israel: "he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria." But in the later books of the Old Testament "towns of Samaria" are spoken of; and later still the name Samaria came to be applied to the whole of central Palestine: in New Testament times Palestine was roughly divided into

Judea, Samaria, Galilee, the district east of Jordan being called Perea.

The Samaritans were a mixed people, descended from a remnant of Israelites and the colonists sent by the King of Assyria to occupy the district of Samaria after the ten tribes had been carried into captivity. Many Jews of Judea, after their return from Babylon, had intermarried with this mongrel people. But when the Mosaic law prohibiting the Jews from intermarrying with foreigners was put in force, Manasses, a priest of Judea, who had married a daughter of Sanballat, the chief of the Samaritans, led a following of Judean Jews to Shechem, taught the Samaritans the Jewish rites, and built a temple on Gerizim. There was some slight ground, therefore, for the claim put forward by the Samaritans, namely that they were descended from the patriarchs, though they had no pretensions whatever to be regarded as the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. In consequence of the Samaritan temple being built at Shechem, that city grew in importance at the expense of Samaria city; though the latter rallied later on. It is probably calumny to say that the Samaritans used to erect false beacons to mislead the Jews as to the times of the Jerusalem feasts; nor is it to be believed that they ever systematically forbade the Galilean pilgrims to pass through their country going to and from the feasts. The Jews, however, had no dealings with the Samaritans in the days of our Lord; and the apostles did not at first preach the Gospel in Samaria.

The Samaritan religion is to this day distinct from the Jewish. But it is the religion of a mere handful now; and these live here, in the south-west quarter of the town. Their Bible consists of the five books of Moses, their version differing slightly from the Jewish. A very ancient and precious copy of this Bible you are shortly to see in the town: it is, in fact, to some people the main sight of the place.

The camp lying outside the east gate, naturally it is by that gate you enter the town. Before reaching the gate, however, you have to make a detour around some unsightly mounds of rubbish. Rubbish is the bane of the East: there seems to be no possibility of disposing of it effectually: at the best it is but a removal of it to a slightly less inconvenient spot: it is never finally got rid of. This it is that accounts for the filling up of the valleys in the city of Jerusalem, as well as the levelling-up at some places outside its walls: this it is that is at the present moment bringing about the obliteration of the Pool of Bethesda that lies along the north side of the Temple ground: you stood and looked, in amazement and disgust, at the gradual filling up of this interesting and to the Christian sacred bit of fosse or moat.

The east gate of Nabulus is by no means a pretentious portal: it is suggestive of the entrance to an old-fashioned farm-steading rather than to a town of some thirteen thousand inhabitants. Inside the gate you are at once in the main street: this stretches straight west before you as you enter, and slopes slightly downwards as it recedes. On either hand as you pass along you see the customary little holes that serve for shops, and that indicate the bazaar. The width of the roadway is little more than a couple of paces. It is rudely causewayed; and the buildings are only one storey high. This bazaar contrasts unfavourably with those of Jerusalem, which present an infinitely busier aspect. Here all is quiet: this the main thoroughfare is practically deserted.

About midway through the town you come upon a wider opening, where there is a little more indication of life. Striking off this to the left or south, you pass up some poor alleys, through a tunnel down which a stream is pouring—it is both a street and river-bed—and turn in to the left to the foot of a stair. The place is so filthy that unless impelled by a sense of duty you would turn and

retrace your steps. Up this stair, however, you must go, if you would see the venerated copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch. At the top of the stair you wait while the door of the synagogue is being opened. This done, you look into a very ordinary room capable of containing a few dozen worshippers, and presently the priest of the place, arrayed in tawdry robes, approaches, and proceeds to unroll the book to your admiring gaze. It is on two silver rollers, of about a couple of feet in length, and with ornamented tops. These rollers are held in an upright position; and as the reader finishes one column he rolls it up, unfurling a fresh portion from the other roller.

The priest who exhibits the relic is himself a picture: tall, of comely features, somewhat sallow, and black-bearded, no wonder he has had himself photographed, roll in hand. But the mercenary element is permitted to obtrude itself disagreeably on the scene: you were prepared to pay a fee for the sight, but you had hardly expected to find them driving a trade in photographs.

They put a fabulous value on this roll. For your own part you would hesitate to entrust more than a trifle to such keeping: but probably zeal is quite as good security as personal wealth, and fanaticism as effective as bars and bolts. And after all, who would think of stealing a treasure of this kind? Even a Shapira could scarcely hope to make capital out of it.

Rather poorly impressed with what you have seen, you descend the stair, stepping gingerly among the filth at its foot; and as you dive again into the tunnel, you are disposed to inquire, in a somewhat angry mood, what sort of worshippers they can be who come here from week to week and do not take care that the way is cleaned, more especially seeing that this is the headquarters, the Vatican, of the body.

Wandering about the town, you are forcibly struck with the vast difference in point of cleanliness between the

Samaritans and the Muslims of the place: here are several mosques, each more cared-for than another. One of these, your guide is most desirous to have you understand, is of overwhelming interest and supreme sanctity. You gaze into the court, not altogether unmoved: you cannot but feel respect for the zeal that cares so genuinely for its idols as to keep them thus clean and elegantly surrounded, idols though they be. This mosque, you are informed, is built on the spot where Jacob received from the hands of his mendacious sons Joseph's coat of many colours. It stands on the edge of the town, at the south-west corner.

Nabulus possesses little more than one main street, the one by which you entered it, and which runs the whole length of the place. In the middle it divides into two, after the manner of tramways which have but one line of rails and must have recourse to a loop-line where cars coming opposite ways may pass each other. In addition to these thoroughfares there are, of course, innumerable lanes running in all directions.

The trade of the place, they tell you, is considerable. There are a great many soap manufactories. This article of commerce is manufactured from olive oil, of which commodity the district furnishes an abundant supply. Wool and cotton, too, have here a ready market; and judging by what you have seen, you would say that there must be a good many hands employed in tanning and dyeing sheepskins: this is the first place where you have seen the preparation of the crimson leather going on, shoes of which are worn by everybody everywhere in this country.

There is a marked resemblance between this place and Hebron: both lie in the valley, nearer to one side than the other, and sloping a little way up the mountain, which rises abruptly behind; in both cases the mountain behind the town is wooded; both towns are long-drawn-out; both lie white among abundant vegetation; the great mosque

at the back of Hebron, though not matched at Nabulus, has yet its counter-part, in a way, in the lofty buildings that rise against the dark mountain side.

Returning to the camp, you are surprised to see a couple of soldiers seated in front of the cooking tent. Can they have come in order to make investigation as to passports, or rather *teskeres*? You really wish you had thought of procuring that bothersome document before starting from Jerusalem. Who can tell what folly may enter into the heads of those probably too hasty officials! This you say in haste.

Entering, you learn that there has indeed been some reference to that matter, but that the dragoman has made it all right: the soldiers are here to guard you, your tents, and your goods, during the coming night. On a previous occasion, it appears, a robbery was committed on a camp at this place, and the military guard were themselves suspected. This is not very reassuring. However, it would be dangerous to set aside this proffered guard, and employ civilians of the town. Besides, it might only be going from bad to worse. For one thing, here comes an officer: it will do no harm to secure his good graces—if that can be done by civility. You invite him to dine. This, however, he declines. And it is perhaps as well he does so, for there are only plates for the party. But his demeanour gives you encouragement to hope that the soldiers have received their instructions, and will act up to them.

Dinner over, and night's black curtain fairly let down all around, your situation is weird enough: the graves lying close by in the rear, the doubtful soldiers peering in through the tent door, and the barking of dogs far up on the slopes of Gerizim opposite—these things combine to throw a cold wet blanket over the party. You retire early—there is no good returning to the town, for all is dark—and the fatigues of the day coming to your aid, soon send you to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO EN-GANNIM.

ANOTHER lovely morning breaks upon your waking, and by the time the first rays of the sun are gilding the top of Gerizim you are riding through the town on your way to Samaria city. Many of the people are already astir. As you approach the west end of the town, and are about quitting its precincts, your eye lights again upon a man at work on the universal red leather: he is hanging up a dripping skin, evidently just taken out of the dye-pot.

Out of the town—you are going westward—the road speedily descends. It is actually a road. The stream flows alongside; green grass and trees abound; the scene is altogether more like the West than anything you have met with hitherto on the journey: were it not for the clumsy cactus hedges, you might almost fancy yourself in Europe. In less than an hour you leave the glen. Before doing so, however, you have seen enough of it to be impressed with its thriving appearance: villages lie on the heights on both sides; and, in the flat below, the meal mills are busy, utilizing the stream. Drawing near to one of these, towards which an elevated conduit stretches itself out, sea-serpent-like, to push its head down the chimney—after the manner of the one you saw by Jacob's Well—you strike northward, taking to the hills. Working your way over these, you soon come in sight of the hill of Samaria. A village lies in the valley between you and it.

Skirting the heights eastward, you soon begin the descent; and after some difficult riding down the glen, you arrive at the great round hill on which the city stood. The ascent is steep, but in about twenty minutes you are among the ruins. Your path has led up the east side. All that remains, besides the ruins, to mark the once noble city is a wretched village of mud hovels.

Just about where the east gate of the city must have stood you dismount, in order to inspect a ruined church which tradition says contains the grave of John the Baptist. Scarcely have you got to the door of the church before the whole population of the village, men, women, and children, gathers about you: they are eager to do a little horse-holding. Zaid, your trusty steed, is soon in their hands; and as you descend the steps to the church, you hear the clamouring and fighting that is going on among the half-dozen rival claimants to your horse's bridle.

The building is roofless. The grave is in a lower storey, or crypt, which is reached by a narrow stone-stair. In this dome-roofed enclosure you look through a small hole in the wall; but the view is not very satisfactory owing to the absence of light beyond.

There are other tombs here besides that of the Baptist: Obadiah, Elijah's servant, is said to lie here; and also Elisha.

Climbing out of the depths, you ascend to the open space where you left your horse. You find the crowd still here: Zaid is apparently in the custody of at least three energetic youths, and you must fee all three. Your next care is to avoid riding over any of the children.

From the church to the village is but a little way: the church stands quite on the hill-side, its door facing the west; and the village lies a little to the west of it, and clings to the south side of the hill. Penetrating the narrow lanes, you have to be careful not to ride down

the fowls that come flying out of every door. It is all you can do, too, to keep your near leg off the manure heaps that at some places so encroach upon the narrow way as to render it barely passable.

But the scramble is brief: you soon emerge on the west side: and lo, you are rewarded. Here is a great level space, with a score of pillars standing like sentries of the Immortals: weather-beaten and worn, and deprived of their tops, they still stand erect, refusing to be put down. This is supposed to be the site of the temple built by Herod the Great.

From this spot westward runs a level terrace of some fifty feet in width, along which on either side is a row of pillars. This must have been a noble colonnade. It encircles the hill. Riding up this decayed avenue you can scarcely repress a feeling of sadness: the line of columns on either hand, some of them fallen, some broken in the middle, many standing entire all but the top, could tell a tale: never surely since pre-Roman times was there a city whose embellishment was effected on such a gigantic scale.

The colonnade is fairly entire along the south side of the hill—that is, as far as to the west gate: beyond this, though the level terrace remains, the pillars are few. By and by you reach the neighbourhood of the church, from which you started on the circuit. The hill, whose circumference at the base is said to be over ten miles, is flat on the top—no doubt artificially levelled. From the flat top down to the encircling terrace with its colonnade is a depth of some fifty feet.

The city of Samaria cannot have been very extensive, unless indeed it crept down the mountain below the belt of terrace. This it may have done; though if it did, the question arises, why should the gates have been so far up the hill as the terrace?

At the west gate the dragoman seizes your arm, and

pointing towards the valley far below, informs you that yonder was the spot where the Syrians lay, and this the gate where the great man was trodden to death.

Tirzah—which lay on a hill a little to the north of Mount Ebal—had been the capital of Israel. In the time of Omri, the palace in Tirzah was burned down. This led Omri to look about for a new site for the royal residence. The hill of Samaria was his choice; and no wonder, for the situation, whether from the point of view of its inaccessibility to intruders, or of the lovely prospect it commands in all directions, is unique: were the whole place constructed to order, it could not have been made other than it is: a shapely mountain with fertile slopes bearing vines and olive trees, surrounded by a valley of some ten or twelve miles in extent, the hills on the farther side of which rise as protectors against the stormy blasts, what site so suitable for a royal residence and a capital!

It was in later days that Herod the Great restored Samaria, calling it Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of Augusta. This he named it in honour of the Roman emperor from whom he had received the city as a gift. Philip the evangelist would see the famous colonnade; and Simon Magus no doubt walked along it many a time.

Many villages lie on the slopes of the hills that encompass the hill of Samaria: to look abroad on the scene is to enjoy a panorama—or cyclorama, as they designate those circular shows now in vogue. But you must descend; for a long way lies yet before you: it is scarcely ten o'clock, and you will do well if you reach En-gannim by six.

Descending by the north-east side, you observe rows of columns on the flat far below: these are said to be the remains of what was once a race-course.

Winding down, you turn to the left, and proceed along the glen that lies on the north side of Sebaste. About half-way, you are startled by the sudden appearance of

quite a crowd of people coming over the hill from the north. They are mostly young, a good many of them being mere children. It is a marriage party. Some are riding on donkeys; the majority walk. And the echoes of a song are wafted across the glen. They are off to fetch the bride from her father's house. Evidently the whole youth of the bridegroom's village, of both sexes, are out on holiday, to assist in this interesting function.

Your path strikes theirs; and before you have passed the junction they are down, and you meet the advance guard. What strikes you most forcibly—after the thought of the wonderful civic unity evidenced by such a large turn out, and the undoubted popularity of the bride and bridegroom—is the brilliant colouring of the procession: it is a rivalling of the wild flowers beneath your horse's feet: red predominates; yellow has the second place, but runs the red very close. The processionists pass on towards Sebaste; your route lies up the glen, in a north-westerly direction, and climbs the hill-side. Villages and olive orchards appear. On, to the top of the hill. Taking a last look at the scenes you are to leave behind, you make north. Descending gradually, past an occasional village, you come down upon the plain, in which runs the direct road between Shechem and En-gannim.

Your luncheon rest to-day has been brief. The place was lovely—among apricot trees in blossom—and you could well have lingered. Possibly that Muslim had something to do with cutting your stay short. Scarcely had you finished your repast when just under your eyes, a couple of paces off, the fellow got down on his knees and commenced his mid-day devotions. He was a stranger. Up he rose, after the manner of his kind, elevated his eyes to heaven, and sank again to his knees, prolonging the obeisance till his forehead touched the ground. You called to mind the scene in which a friend of yours once came into collision with a troupe of the King of Oude's men at

Calcutta, who were bearing an idol. Driving a spirited horse, he was met by the religious procession. The tumult and the general hubbub startled the beast, and an accident seemed imminent. John Bull, with characteristic impatience of what appeared to him a nonsensical ritual, handed the reins to his comrade, and jumping off, rushed at the image and dealt it a terrific blow with a stick. Owing to a fortuitous concourse of happy circumstances he escaped what at first threatened to be disaster; but the experiment is not one to repeat. You think this obtrusive Muslim merits a snub for thrusting his piety under your nose, when he might so easily have sought a more retired spot; but you let him alone.

Down into the plain, you come upon a livelier scene: here are men ploughing. The plough is made of wood, and so small and light is the entire implement that it can be easily lifted over a stone, and that with one hand. Indeed it is held with one hand, by a small cross-stick at the top of the upright, just as you would hold a walking-stick. A couple of oxen pull it; and the ploughman both urges on and guides these by touching their hind-quarters with the point of a long spear which he carries levelled in that direction: he uses no reins: if the furrow tends too much towards the right he touches the right-hand ox, and contrariwise. But the ploughing is only scratching.

In this flat you actually meet a traveller: he turns out to be a government official from Beyrout—a long way off. Armed to the teeth, and mounted on a prancing steed, he is followed by a soldier, also armed and well mounted. Some road-making is being projected—and not too soon.

After many ups and downs, you cross a long grassy flat, at the east end of which stands the small hill of Dothan. It is level on the top, and must have been a pretty site for a village—a very miniature Samaria. Your long journey to-day, up to this point, represents Joseph's wander in search of his brethren: here he found them.

You are now near the borders of the great Plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, which sweeps by the north side of the hill country you have been traversing. And the day is far spent. The dragoman is getting anxious lest the darkness overtake the party. He is riding along the line, now whipping up one beast; now another. One of the company is rather helpless by reason of a sprained ankle: he cannot stand more than a walking pace. But his boy, who leads the horse, is pulling tight in front of him; and there is a general feeling of intense pushing on, though the chariot wheels will drag. No one is in a mood for conversation: this is what the Scotch would call dour work.

The novel sight of telegraph-posts wakes your dormant energies: now En-gannim must be near. Still through the grassy glen, not a house to be seen, you by and by turn to the left or north, and come upon some women taking water from a stream. This also looks hopeful. Tired as you are, you cannot refrain from laughing: that woman, standing over the stream, a foot on either side of it, and gazing at your calvacade, is such an oddity: trousers would be nothing; but these knickerbockers and bare limbs—one leg of the garment visibly longer than the other—are too much: never did woman dress to less advantage: she might be a gutter-boy.

North this grassy glen, by the side of the stream, and you soon pass some encampments: these are caravans travelling with merchandise. By this route came the merchants, Ishmaelites from beyond Jordan, who on passing Dothan took Joseph away to Egypt. They come the same way still.

En-gannim at last! Leaving the greater part of the town on your right, you turn west, cross the stream again, and find your tents standing on a broad knoll on the right. Your enemy, the cactus hedge, is here in uncommon glory. You dislike its clumsy limbs for one thing; but the nose

is offended as well as the eye; for those great fat leaves, resembling loaves of bread, or penny rolls in the good days of old, smell much too sweetly when half rotten. And the under ones are always rotting. En-gannim, however, in spite of its too abundant cactus thickets, is heartily welcome after a twelve hours' ride.

This little town, now called Jenin, is no doubt the En-gannim mentioned in Joshua. It played no part in Bible history, beyond being twice referred to by Joshua in his geographical description of the districts allotted to the several tribes. Unless, indeed, the reference in Second Kings to the garden-house is read as applying to En-gannim. En-gannim means "gardens' spring." There is a spring here. And most probably, taking the context into account, Beth-gan or garden-house is only another way of designating En-gannim or gardens' spring: at that time there may have been but one house here, or at any rate but one large house. If these things are so, it was by this way that Ahaziah the king of Judah came, fleeing from Jehu.

Nor has En-gannim been of importance in later times: the reason why it is thrust to the front is because it lies on the highway, and is a convenient halting place.

Before it gets quite dark you must have a look at the interior. Mounting to the summit of the knoll—but a few paces above the tents—you discover that, as happened at Shechem, you are on the edge of the cemetery. Descending the northern slope, and wending your way through among the graves, you make for the town-gate, from which you perceive a road issuing. Inside, you turn to the left or north, and are at once in the market-place. Here the men of the town, in considerable numbers, are seated in groups of threes and fours smoking and thinking—for there is little conversation going on. The scene is picturesque: the white turbans, and the grey sack-like camels' hair over-garments, not to speak of

the bare ankles, and the broad once-red heelless and backless shoes, harmonize with the flat-roofed white-washed houses around ; and the picture is completed by the mosque, whose minaret towers in the background. Your advent is at once noticed : every eye is upon you. Not knowing whether, in advancing, you may not be going on a fool's errand, to have to turn, the square probably lacking an exit at the farther end, you nevertheless advance. The Arabs evidently note a degree of hesitancy in your gait, for they politely wave with the hand in the direction of the particular corner out of which the street runs. You lift your hat in response, and take the turning indicated. This brings you into a long narrow street which ascends the hill to the right or south. Up this you go, resolved to see the end of it.

Well up, it chances that just as you are about to pass a certain door, the door opens, and out steps a young man, a Jew, as you perceive by the long lock of hair in front of either ear. His dress too bespeaks his nationality : a shabby black felt hat, very level in the brim and supplemented with a piece of black cloth—sometimes they have it white—so fixed as to cover the back hair ; a striped petticoat ; a modern jacket of grey cloth—the latter plainly indicating contact with Europeans, probably in Jerusalem : these marks would distinguish him from the Arabs, even did he lack the characteristic pair of long locks.

As if acquainted with you of old, this man seizes your hand—although handshaking is not practised among these people—and accompanies you to the top of the street. Above this is the open hill. It suffices to look down upon the town immediately below, to glance along the glen to the left or south—the glen you rode up a little while ago—and to cast your eyes over by the camp, and across the lowlands beyond : you are on the north edge of the hill-country : these are but hillocks

now; and a very little way will bring you into the great plain.

Your companion is good enough to point out some features of the landscape. In return for this he fancies he has laid up with you a store of gratitude on the strength of which he may presume to accompany you to the camp. His history is brief: a shoemaker to trade, he has lost one of his hands; his wife is dead; he is at present a burden on a brother—also a shoemaker—and would like to be assisted to go to England: would anybody in the camp be likely to take him along? You shake your head, as much as to say, “That is a hopeless enough prospect.” He clings to you however; and you only manage to shake him off on the outskirts of the camp. A little later he has established himself among the camp attendants, and has so far progressed in his endeavour to be taken in tow that a message from him to one of the party, a well-known London physician, is actually passed into the dining tent by the dragoman. The kind doctor, tired enough without worrying with patients, consents to see the man. The consultation is in public. In reply to inquiries as to his symptoms he draws the long bow at the outset, and coolly announces that he has had a headache for about two years. Further questioned he begins to contradict himself, and is fain to escape, without having broached the subject nearest to the heart.



NAZARETH.

CHAPTER XV.

TO NAZARETH.

IN the morning you are up betimes, and taking your stand on the highest point of the little cemetery are prepared to crow like an industrious barn-door fowl. You are not the only one astir, however, for though the town seems asleep, here comes a man out by the gate, driving a donkey. Whipping it up, he hastens along the road towards the west. Your route is northward. Riding into the town by the west gate, you pass out by the north, leaving the mosque on your left. The road is perfectly level, though hardly a road, and crosses arable lands.

You are now at the corner of the great plain of Esdraelon, or as it is called in the Bible, valley of Jezreel. Standing here, facing the north-west, you see the great plain run out towards the sea, like a highway some ten miles broad. On its left or south side it is bounded by the mountains of Samaria, ending in Carmel: on its right or north by the mountains of Nazareth. Carmel looks very diminutive seen from here: but then it is some four-and-twenty miles away.

And next, turning a little, and facing the north, you look up another portion of the same plain: it, too, resembles a highway, being bounded on the east by the mountains of Gilboa, on the west by the mountains of Nazareth, and terminating at the foot of Tabor, which seems set down there to block the way.

Your route lies along by the base of the bare Gilboa range. As you proceed, you are more and more struck with the likeness of the great plain to a lake of land: not a house, not a tree, not a fence to be seen. There are a few villages, it is true; but these lie on hillocks—whether artificial or not would be hard to say. They somewhat resemble the Egyptian villages, which are built on hillocks for protection against the high Nile. These here might have been islets, the water having dried up but yesterday.

It is not far from Jenin to Jezreel—only some eight or nine miles. The way being comparatively level and easy, you ride up the slopes of the rising ground on which lay the famous city, earlier than you had anticipated. As you approach the place, you are struck with its squalid appearance: your way lies through manure heaps and giant weeds. Beyond these rise the hovels of the villagers—poorer than almost any you have ever seen: the place might take a prize for squalour. The village on the site of Samaria city was bad enough: this is below the lowest depths you could have conceived. You ride all over the village and the adjoining ruins. The latter are of no account: nothing remains of the royal palace: there is a square tower, but it is a poor affair, and cannot boast of any great antiquity.

This is a spur of Gilboa on which you stand: it comes off Gilboa westward; and immediately beyond Jezreel, westward, it gradually loses itself in the plain. It is in fact a ridge sloping southwards towards the plain you have just come up, and sloping northwards into the valley of Jezreel proper, which runs from here right east to the Jordan. The site of Jezreel is admirable: it looks almost as if artificially constructed, so beautifully is it adapted to the purposes of a city: elevated above the plain sufficiently to be beyond the dread of sudden attack; commanding a view of the country far and near

on three sides; and protected by Gilboa which bounds its fourth or east side: no wonder it was made a royal residence.

Jezreel, as it is to-day, reminds one of a decayed farmstead: weeds are growing rank; the ground is uneven with heaps of stones; and, horrible, a pile of white bones lies by the back of the dead wall near by the tower—they recall the terrible death of Jezebel, who was thrown from a window here, and devoured by dogs. All these bones have been cleaned by the dogs.

The rider—and still more the pedestrian—needs to keep a sharp look-out here: at every step are treacherous holes, entrances to underground granaries. No one takes the trouble to lay a large stone on the mouth of those well-like caverns: the sight of a bare spot, as contrasted with the thick weeds about, is all the warning the traveller has. You will be thankful to find yourself safe down on the plain again.

But, before descending, you think of Saul, who slew himself somewhere about here, after seeing his sons slain and his army defeated by the Philistines; of Elijah's run from Carmel hither in advance of Ahab; of Naboth's vineyard, which lay on one of these slopes; of the tower here from which the watchman espied Jehu driving furiously.

As you ride down the north-western slope, the villagers are all out watching you: they look long after you, as if it were a strange experience to see travellers pass this way.

Down into the broad valley, you turn and look east. Out in that direction goes the plain of Jezreel proper to the Jordan, as already stated. Bethshan, to whose walls they fastened the body of Saul, lies along there at the end of the valley, near the Jordan. Along there also, on the right, under Gilboa, is Gideon's Fountain. There the three hundred, who lapped with their tongues

like dogs, were chosen to do battle against the Midianites, who lay by the hill of Moreh.

Looking across to the north, you face Little Hermon, the Moreh of old. On that side of the valley lies Shunem, a placid place, under shelter from the north winds. It was there the Shunamite woman lived, in whose house Elisha was wont to lodge, and whose son he restored to life. Over the hills that rise behind Shunem lies Endor: that climb Saul undertook, in order to consult the witch, the night before the fatal battle.

Forward into the great plain, your route lies across tilled lands. The soil is of a light colour, like sand; and at some places the roadside is washed into great cracks, as if, in the time of heavy rain, an opening had been forced into a subterranean cavern, the soil escaping by that way. Your horse would be quite unable to come out were it to slip its foot and go down into one of those trenches, so alarmingly deep are they, and just of sufficient width to contain a horse. It gives zest, however, to the otherwise monotonous journey to ride across and across these traps: anything for variety on a road like this. It seems no great distance to the foot of the hills that bound the plain on the west side: that point that you are making for is quite distinct, and has been all along from the moment of leaving Jezreel; but there is something deceptive about it: here you have been jogging along for hours—at a slow pace indeed, for the road is so soft—but still going on; and you seem about as far off your destination as ever. You ride down and down this gentle decline, until you are ready to double into two: the inner man gives warning of collapse.

What joy it is to reach a cross-road! This is the great caravan route from Damascus to Jerusalem, and thence to Egypt. It is quiet at present: neither man nor beast is in view, north or south. Up this road, northward, Mount Tabor is to be seen, not far off: a large squat

conical mountain, well-wooded, and standing apart on the edge of the great plain, it might pass for a specially prepared local ornament. A little way beyond Tabor, and you would come upon the Lake of Tiberias.

You endeavour to screw up your courage—no easy matter—and to settle in the saddle for yet a good many field-lengths: rest will be all the sweeter when it comes. And what draughts of water you will take—if, that is, there be a spring where you halt! With these and kindred reflections—all of them limp and flabby enough, for the mind is languid—the ground is being gone over. And yet it is the horses, after all, that have most cause of complaint.

As you draw near to the long-looked-at mountains of Nazareth, you begin to find fresh objects of interest; and your aches are forgot. What are these dotted thick on the steep face of the hills? They look like sheep; but they are actually camels. Footing they seem to have none: the whole scene suggests a clever arrangement of toys.

And here at length is the resting-place—and a spring. The horses are led to a lower part of the tiny water-course, and left to themselves. You gladly throw your weary limbs on the ground, leaning back on the rocks: never was there more luxurious couch. It is consoling, moreover, to be told that Nazareth, your camping-place for the night, is now within an hour's ride.

The road from this point is very steep: it attacks the face of the hills in the most daring and determined manner. If the long descent into the plain was tiresome to the back, this is being thrown into the reverse position most thoroughly. Instead of having your nose pointing in the direction of mother earth, you now tip-tilt it in spite of yourself, and begin to scan the heavens—not in vain, for the eagles are poised above your head, wide-winged, waiting for a lamb or a kid of the flock.

Far up the mountain face, your road turns to the right or north, and climbs a valley. A few more turns, and you are in sight of Nazareth. It lies in a shallow basin, up among the mountain tops. The road approaches it—from the east, of course—arriving at its south-east corner. This is a fairly good road: one wonders why such labour should have been expended here, seeing that travellers by this way must be few, the route leading to the sea-like plain you have just worked across—and that is practically nowhither. At the same time, such a hilly road would have been almost impassable, had it been but a bridle-path.

Nazareth is a white, cheerful-looking town. It lies on the west slope of the basin, a hollow at its feet, and looks across a considerable expanse—half an hour's walk—till, peeping over the farther lip—which is not nearly so high as that behind the town—it views the mountain tops beyond the plain. From the back of the town the village of Nain, perched on the north slope of Moreh, and only about an hour on this side of Endor, can be seen.

You enter Nazareth, then, at its south-east corner. Here the road skirts a hollow waste on your right, while on your left rise the houses and terrace-like gardens of the Latin quarter. Just where the road begins to have town on either side, and is already steep, making up-hill to the market-place in the interior, you dismount: here, on your right, in the very forefront of the town—the rest of the place all clustering round above, behind it, in a semi-circle, as if looking down in admiration upon this the spot of supreme interest—stands the Latin monastery, with the Church of the Annunciation. A number of school-boys are at play within the enclosure: these gather about you as you ascend the steps towards the church.

The Church of the Annunciation, it need hardly be said, is believed to be built over the spot where stood the house in which Mary dwelt when she received the announce-

ment from the angel Gabriel. It is also well known that the Latins believe the original house to have been miraculously transported to Loreto in Italy.

Entering, you are curious to see what like the interior is, and how the church has adapted the domestic to the ecclesiastical—perhaps the most difficult function devolving on the churches, especially in these latter days—let him that readeth understand.

You enter the church from the east side. It is not a very commodious building, but neat and clean. Right before you, at the farther or western end of the church is a broad marble stair, leading down to underground places. Down there—as you can see from the top of the stair—are altars.

Descending the broad stair, you stand in a small apartment called the Chapel of the Angels. A passage, or rather, open doorway leads farther, two steps down, into another chapel called that of the Annunciation. On either side of this doorway stands an altar, in the outer chapel. Facing you, as you enter the inner chapel, is the Altar of the Annunciation. Here, on your left hand as you stand facing the altar, just inside the doorway, are two pillars, said to mark the spots where the Angel and Mary respectively stood. This, then, is the *sanctum sanctorum*: this is the room, or the place where stood the room, in which Mary was found by the heavenly messenger.

Passing to the right, you penetrate still farther: a small doorway leads into a slightly larger dark chamber, the Chapel of Joseph. From this a narrow and dark stair leads to a still more remote apartment, called the kitchen of the Virgin.

All these places are underground, and dark except for the altar-lamps that are kept burning. The fact of their being underground need, of course, be no stumbling-block: you have seen quite enough elsewhere to prepare you for the possibility of a much greater depth of accumulated

soil than is implied in a house being one or even two storeys below the surface.

These places inspected, and such reflections indulged in as the occasion seems to warrant, you begin to think of moving on. The funny-looking fat little priest, who has been your guide through the vaults, now stands quietly by, as if waiting to obey your next call. You solicit his assistance in finding out the other places of interest in the town. To your surprise he volunteers to accompany you. Retiring into the sacristy for sundry keys, he beckons you to follow. There is nothing of interest here, beyond the curious fact that the keys seem to be so seldom used that the priest has a prolonged search for them. They are found at length; and your petticoated friend again beckons your attendance. As he passes into the church, and in front of the altar, he kneels. This he has done every time you and he have passed the altar; and he will do it again on returning from his brief mission with you. A pleasant-faced little man he is, tonsured, and painfully sober in countenance; yet, all the time, you cannot help eyeing him with a measure of amusement: you seem to be holding carnival, albeit your companion's dress wears a rather lenten look: but he is such a comical likeness of a prim old lady of your acquaintance that you can hardly regard him seriously.

Going out into the street, you proceed up the town a little way, and then strike to the right, into the neighbourhood behind, or to the west of, the church. This is the Muslim quarter of the town. The houses here are but huts. They are so closely planted that mere foot-paths divide them: it is as though a hundred monster beehives had been set down at random, space being at a premium. And the people seem all of them interested in each other's affairs: speak to that woman who stands gaping out of her door, and in an instant all the other inhabitants within hearing will be out to assist.

Threading your way with careful steps among these hovels and rubbish-heaps, you arrive at a door in a wall. The natives are on the alert, and all in this particular locality are bent on having a good look at you. They are civil, however, and seem disposed to be friendly.

Inside the enclosure is a small chapel, said to occupy the site of Joseph's workshop. It would be quite near to the dwelling-house, which stood a little lower to the east.

Retracing your steps, carefully avoiding the fluttering hens that fly screaming in all directions, and patting on the head any of the naked children that run against your legs, you once more make the street. Your next visit is farther up the town, to a chapel in the Greek quarter, containing a curious flat-topped rock called the Table of Christ. On your way thither you pass right up the market-place, or rather street. It is only of the width of an ordinary street, though wide in comparison with the lanes that are the normal thoroughfares. A little way up, the street is deflected to the left; a little farther it again goes straight forward; and a little farther and it again bends to the left or south. Following the street that is a prolongation of this latter portion of the market-place you soon arrive at the Chapel of the Table.

The so-called Table of Christ is a piece of chalk-like rock, about the height of a table, larger in area than an ordinary table, and though flat on the top yet sloping. It would be a very uncomfortable table to sit at. However, tradition has it that our Lord and His disciples used it as such; and that is perfectly possible, nay probable; for, to a company of wayfarers, such as our Lord and His disciples would be when frequenting these parts, a rock of this formation would suggest itself as a very suitable place on which to lay the figs and bread and perhaps an onion or two which would constitute the mid-day meal.

The site of this chapel is in the south-west outskirts of the town, well up the hill. Immediately behind is a steep

overhanging place, which they point out as the scene of the intended precipitation. A different place, however—some two miles east of the town—contends for this distinction; but without a shadow of reason: they would never have led our Lord away down through the town—the synagogue would be in the market-place where it is now—across the swampy hollow, and over to the heights on the far side, when they had the brow of the hill immediately at the back of the town near at hand, and quite as effective for their purpose.

These are the sacred spots of Nazareth—unless the Greek Church of Gabriel in the northern outskirts be considered one of them. It claims to be built on the spot where Gabriel, according to an apocryphal Gospel, talked with Mary, not in her house, but while she was fetching water from the spring—the only spring of the place—which flows past here, and not far off pours its waters forth at what is called Mary's Well.

The road by which you enter the town, and which, prolonged to the left, becomes Market Street, and still farther prolonged, leads to the Chapel of the Table, divides the town into its several religious quarters. That is to say, the Latin quarter lies on your left as you enter the town—though the Church of the Annunciation is on the right, in the Muslim quarter. The road forks at the point where Market Street strikes off to the left. The Greek quarter lies in the fork. The right-hand prong of the fork is the thoroughfare through the town, leading into the country northwards. As you pass along this thoroughfare the Greek quarter rises on the slopes on your left, while the Muslim lies on the lower ground on the right.

The name Galilee signifies "circuit" or "district." It was originally applied to a small mountain district near Kedesh in Naphtali. In Second Kings it is named, along with Kedesh and other towns, as if it were but a town

itself. District of the peoples, or Galilee of the Gentiles, seems to have been its full designation. Subsequently the name Galilee came to embrace that large tract of country that lies to the west of the Waters of Merom and the Lake of Tiberias, including the Plain of Esdraelon you have just crossed—altogether about a third of Palestine. The extreme northern portion of this province went under the name of Upper Galilee, the southern and larger portion being called Lower Galilee. Sepphoris, a town familiar to readers of Josephus, was the capital, until Herod Antipas built Tiberias.

Galilee had been robbed of its people at the Captivity. Unlike Samaria, however, it was re-colonized from Judea after the return. With a considerable admixture of foreign elements among them, the Jews nevertheless predominated. These foreign elements, along with other causes, notably the remoteness of Jerusalem, made the Galilean Jews to be less strict in the matter of religious observances, and more ignorant of their law than the brethren in Judea. Consequently the latter despised them. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The Galileans were a brave people, hardened by two causes: in the first place they were surrounded by foreigners, and had to be ever ready to repel the incursions of plunderers, who were attracted by the crops and the general wealth of the country—for Galilee was much the finest portion of the Holy Land: and in the second place, the fertility of the district stimulated the people themselves to great effort in the matter of tilling the soil and tending their fruits. As was to be expected, Galilee teemed with population. The Galileans, partly no doubt owing to their bravery, had the name of being turbulent and seditious. It is thought by some that the so-called Zealots, who figured so badly in Jerusalem in the final siege, were mostly if not exclusively from the north. In St. Luke's Gospel our Lord speaks of the Galileans whose

blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices—on the occasion of some visit to Jerusalem. In the Acts, too, St. Peter refers to one Judas of Galilee, who in the days of the taxing—probably with the view of setting at defiance the government's orders—rose up and drew away much people after him. Our Lord was a Galilean, and, as such, would be supposed to share the Galilean antipathy to the Romans : was this thought in the minds of those men who tempted Him, saying, "Tell us, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or no?"

But if our Lord, like the rest of the Galileans, was liable to the taunt of inexactness in the matter of observing the formalities and niceties of the ceremonial law, he had the advantage of growing up among people who breathed the clear air of liberality of thought. This it was that so fitted Him, humanly speaking, for the work of denouncing Pharisaism. The speech of the Galileans was vulgar in the ears of the Jerusalem Jews—another reason why our Lord and His disciples were received with coldness in the metropolis. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee," said the damsel to Peter.

Nazareth is to the Christian the most intensely interesting spot in the Holy Land. Here it was that Jesus spent His early days, growing in grace, and in favour with God and man. He would know familiarly every foot of ground about the place : all the roads in turn would be the scenes of His walks and meditations. He would have His acquaintances—though probably few intimates. He would be known in the village, and remarked upon. Is it not singular that of all His young neighbours not one was found worthy to go forth with Him to listen to His divine words and learn to speak as a disciple! It has been remarked that our Lord shows traces, in His subsequent teaching, of the deep hold that nature, as exhibited in the features of the country about this upland village, had taken upon His mind : the house built on a

rock ; the sower going forth to sow ; the barren fig tree ; the mustard seed ; the labourers in the vineyard ; the strayed sheep.

Your camp lies on the northern outskirts, near Mary's Well. On the way you take the direct thoroughfare—the right-hand prong of the fork—and pass between the Greek and Muslim quarters, the latter, as has been said, on the right. The houses on the Greek side of this thoroughfare are modern, one of them actually calling itself a hotel, though but a small two-storey building. As on previous occasions, the tents are again pitched on the edge of a cemetery—the cemetery attached to the Greek Church of Gabriel already mentioned. But it is a pleasant place ; fresh-looking because of the abundant hedges and thickets about, especially on the side next the town ; and near good water.

A well-dressed, well-favoured young man follows you from the town. He has made several attempts to gain your ear, and has at last, after wearying you with importunities, elicited the dragoman's name. Fortified with this information, he seeks admission to the camp. Probably more from curiosity to see the sequel than from any hope of the youth's mission being fulfilled, Joseph presents him to the company. Here sits the London physician enjoying the partial cool of the afternoon—and resting, after the fashion of the Christian West, for it is Sunday—and by him his charming wife ; while the others of the party are not far off. It soon gets to be known that a somewhat extraordinary young man has presented himself ; and all gather round. He is, he declares, a native of Nazareth, the son of a carpenter in Nazareth, and himself brought up to that trade. This announcement produces a sensation in the camp : the youth evidently has our Lord in his mind.

But alas for the parallel : this is no enthusiast, seeking not his own but the good of others : he desires—

tell it not—to be adopted by the rich doctor, to be taken to London as the foundling of fortune, and there to mix with the gilded youth as one of themselves. Noble ambition! Need it be said his fond hopes are speedily blighted? Yet he will no doubt repeat the attempt from year to year as tents are pitched here, and travellers come this way: and who can tell but some one may be captivated by the romantic idea, and carry off this latter-day carpenter of Nazareth who seeks the delights of self, not sacrifice?

The situation of Nazareth resembles a theatre—not in the modern sense of that word, but one of those stone-seated semicircular structures, common to Asia and Europe in the olden time, usually scooped out of a hill-side, and with the vault of heaven for roof. Probably it would have been wiser to have built the town in the hollow of the basin, or at all events under the level of Mary's Well; for then it would have been possible to have drained the place, and flooded the streets at will. As it is, the town is crowded up the concave face of the hill, and for the most part it has to be dependent upon stores of rain-water. This has to be economized, and consequently the streets and lanes have to go unwashed. It is positively pitiful to see the filthy condition of Nazareth: they have a novel arrangement here—at least nothing like it is to be seen in Samaria or Judea—the street consists of three divisions: on either side is a narrow causewayed footpath, while the middle, about a yard in width, and several inches below the level of the footpaths, is the gutter. The stranger is apt to find himself tramping industriously up this open sewer, fancying he is “keeping in the middle of the road,” and deeming it a rather good idea to strew the way with green stuff: but the smells soon wake him up; and he nimbly migrates to either side, getting out his handkerchief and holding it to his nose.

What a pity they cannot keep a place like this clean ! The houses are white, the hills are whitish, everything so far as outward nature is concerned looks clean : but the interior is rottenness.

You are driven to these rasping reflections on your way up through the town to visit the English Protestant Girls' Orphanage. Once up, however, you are rewarded for the nose-holding you have come through. This is a spacious building : it consists of two long parallel tiers, a stair leading up from the front or lower to the back or upper. The view is all-embracing towards the east : the teachers point out Nain, far over, on the north slope of the hill of Moreh.

You enjoy a peaceful hour up here. The girls—some hundred in number—sing a few hymns. You are entertained to tea. And towards evening you descend through the town, and make your way to the northern suburbs to the camp. The ladies in charge of the school have had troubles to contend with : some time ago, just when their great tank was full of rain-water, and they were congratulating themselves on having got a supply for many days, indeed for the season, the front wall gave way, and a small deluge was the result. You are very sorry for them, of course ; but you could not help thinking it would be a good thing for the town were reservoirs in the upper parts to burst periodically.

The bustle of dinner is on in the camp. Several natives seem to be lending a hand in the cook's tent. The horses are lying in front of the tents, tied to a pinned-down rope. The light of the candles in the dining tent is kindly, suggestive of the near repast. Resolved to have for once a good drink of water, you request the dragoman to let you have one of the terra-cotta water-jars in which supplies are regularly carried. This you take down to Mary's Well, but some fifty paces to the east, and on the roadside—to have it washed out and filled.

The well is positively besieged at this hour, a dozen maidens, in all the colours of the rainbow, clustered about it with water-jars. The stream pours itself forth through two pipes. These project a little way from the stone-work, and pour incessantly into a wide trough-like basin, a yard below. To prevent your getting soaked—for an inch or two of water stands in the square trough, and though you might have stepped on some of the numerous stones lying in the bottom, the splashing that is always going on from the down-pour of the two streams would have wetted your feet and trousers—the maidens kindly volunteer to wash out and fill the jar for you. The one into whose hands it comes, happens to be washing some garment or other at the pipe. Barefooted, she stands in the pool, heedless of the spray; and you are obliged to her; but instead of depositing the soaked garment at her feet until she shall have attended to your jar, she simply lays it over the projecting pipe. You hope the drip from it did not go to augment the current, and so into your jar. You must really take your chance: those people have no idea of such niceties: if you are dissatisfied, the only way would be to return after they have all gone, and fill it again. You would want, moreover, to scrub the mouth of the pipe, after its contact with soiled clothes. And all this is scarcely practicable. Besides, the stream itself seems to flow through the cemetery; and perhaps things are already about as bad as they can well be made. All the same your jar is highly popular at dinner: every one wishes to be supplied from it.

One of the party possesses a filter—a small pocket thing, which he lays on its face in a plate, and sucks the water through it by means of an indiarubber tube. He has a modest supply of whisky in camp. The bottle is placed on the table, and he pours a little into the plate beside the filter; but he always protests that the filter declines to let the spirit go through.

There is a Turkish governor of Nazareth. The dragoon has been to see him about your *teskere*, or rather the *teskere* which is not yours, for you, have yet to procure one. Details have been noted—such as your presumable height, the colour of your hair, and what not—and you are to receive the document in the morning by six o'clock, without fail. All this sounds comforting: you hope the event may tally with the promise.

And now you saunter forth in the starry night to take in a little more of the impression which this place seems never done making. Without a doubt the child Jesus would often trudge to this well—the only well about the place. Many a time, too, would it come into His memory as He trode the thirsty slopes of Zion. These hill-tops all about would be familiar to Him, every one. The very streets, it can hardly be doubted, are much the same now as then; for the Oriental is not a Hausmann, and knows nothing of your Western methods of running avenues through once dense rookeries, and opening localities up.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO TIBERIAS.

THE morning is lovely, and the strong scent coming from the green bushes around is most reviving.

By six o'clock you are mounting Zaid, and preparing to start, notwithstanding the fact that you are as yet without a teskere : the want of it is no fault of yours in this instance : it must be set down to the laziness of the police. You wash your hands of all responsibility in the matter.

Down to Mary's Well, where Zaid gets a drink, you take to the left, and are soon scaling the hill that rises behind the north end of the town. At the top, you turn to take a last look at Nazareth ; and riding over to the north side of the hill, descend into a deep valley. This you journey down into by a long sloping road. The direction in which you are travelling is about due north. At the farther end of this valley you pass a village on your left, and reach a spring, where several of the villagers are already congregated. The cactus hedge on your right is one of the largest you have seen.

Still forward, the road rising and sweeping towards the north-west, you pass the birthplace of Jonah, the Gath-hepher of old, but now called Meshed. The village lies on a hillock. Down by the east side of this hillock, the village on your left, you soon strike eastward through a dreary glen, and are glad after a mile or two to welcome the sight of Kefr Kenna, the Cana of Galilee of the New

Testament—at least, as many believe. Before quite reaching the village, you pass a stone trough—an old coffin apparently—in which is a plentiful supply of water, and from which, or at any rate from the spring that supplies it, the water of the village has been drawn, from time immemorial. It would be hither they would come to fetch the water with which they filled the water-pots, at the marriage feast, “up to the brim.”

Cana is a poor village. As you ride forward to the little chapel which the Greek Church has erected on the traditional site of the house where the water was made wine, you find no pleasant path: it is hardly a road, by the backs of some wretched hovels, among manure heaps. Inside the chapel, you are shown over the place, handling one of the identical water-pots of the miracle, and resting for a little to think how primitive the whole affair, short of the miracle, must have been, if the village of to-day is at all like what the old one was. In all probability there is not much difference. The chapel has changed the aspect of the place somewhat: small and plain as the building is, it nevertheless takes away from the otherwise unbroken quaintness of the rustic hamlet: but Cana is in all conscience quaint and primitive enough, and will continue to be so, so long as the goats and the fowls are to the front. The people seem cleanly, though living with the beasts; and the women evidently vie with their neighbours of Nazareth in the brightness of the colours they wear.

This is what would be called a back-lying neighbourhood: though not in a hollow, there is but little to be seen from it: you feel as if you would like to wander across to some of the higher parts about, and look over, to see whether any more of the world is visible from there.

Nor do matters mend much in this respect as you progress. Your route lies north-eastward, and you gradually ascend till a point is reached from which, to the right, a

rugged glen is seen. Over the hills that line the farther side of this glen rises the dome-like top of Tabor ; but still the prospect is limited. Tabor seems near, but you are much too distant from it to distinguish anything like buildings on the summit, though it boasts a couple of monasteries, both claiming, with little reason, to mark the scene of the Transfiguration : the theatre of that event must be sought elsewhere.

Some of the land about here is ploughed, and evidently fertile ; but the farming suggests the field of the sluggard. This plantation close by is a tempting spot for lunch. The horses are tied by the feet, as usual, and left to themselves in the bouldered moor outside. Lunch over, you seek the warm sunshine near by the horses. Here, stretched on your back on a sofa-like boulder, you court half an hour's repose : this incessant journeying is beginning to tell upon you, as it has already done on some of the others, notably your tent comrade, who has been doctoring himself for the last three or four days, notwithstanding the presence of a real doctor in the camp. The truth is, he is not on speaking terms with the doctor. Not that there have been any words between them : nothing of the sort : it all arose from the simple accidental circumstance that the first morning at breakfast neither the doctor nor his accomplished wife greeted this gentleman on entering, nor did he greet them : ever since, they have ignored each other ; and they bid fair to do so to the end.

The unwonted sight of your lithe form laid supine on a rock well nigh produces a panic in the camp : no sooner have the others strolled out from the wood than you are observed ; and the first to pounce is the doctor's wife. Good-heartedness itself, she runs to bring her husband. Presently a consultation is being held around your hard couch ; and in the circumstances you deem it best to sit up and disclaim all connection with sickness—although there is just the least sensation of limpness about the inner

man. You protest that if left alone for fifteen minutes, you will be as fit as on the day you left Jerusalem.

But your rest soon comes to an end : a cry gets up that one of the horses has escaped ; and the dragoman dreads its falling into the hands of some of those roving blades who occupy the black tents on the farther side the glen—it appears they are renowned for such jobs. There is bustling and yelling on every side : to have lain still would have been to run the risk of being trampled on by some of the attendants in their hopeless running to and fro.

How it has come to be known in what direction the runaway has gone, or whether they have but a shrewd suspicion that it must have gone that way, you have no idea. There is flinging on of saddles however, and tightening of girths, and in breathless haste two of the men are off at a gallop in the direction of the black tents. Never were there horsemen like the Arabs. Those fellows are already flying across boulders, and through thickets, and down the face of the hill : they are out of sight in no time.

Surely to-day, without incurring the reproach of joining yourself to the grumbler, you may be permitted to reflect as to the unpleasant tendency of misfortunes to travel not singly but in pairs at the least : scarcely have the men returned with the straying horse, and a sense of peace has once more begun to pervade the caravan, when lo, a howling arises, accompanied with such a rattling off of vocabulary, that in the language of the old woman, your heart almost jumps off its pivot. The junior boy, it appears, had lost his temper over the white donkey. That fine specimen of its kind, whose intelligence you have ever admired since the day you saw it working its way up a rugged road in the neighbourhood of Samaria city, progressing sidewise when it came to narrow parts of the rocky pass, so that the baggage on either side of its body might have room, and all this without the attention of a driver—

that beast you are convinced needs not to be chastised. Possibly the boy had been upset by the escape of the horse: it is quite probable indeed, that he may have been to blame, or blamed, for the unfortunate occurrence. At all events he was shorter in the temper than usual; and when the donkey, at starting, seemed to have some doubts as to the route it was meant to take, the boy seized a stone, as big as his hand could wield, and proceeded to beat the poor beast on the head with it. The sight of such brutality raised a howl of execration from the party; and one of them, the only expert horseman of the company, a most genial and kindly man, and the last likely to give way to violent impulses, happening to be close by, wheeled his horse into position, and brought his stick down upon the boy's back with no uncertain sound. This it was that originated the howling, which, mixed with much speech, is going on still. Tears are streaming down the lad's cheeks: his feelings have evidently suffered more severely than his back. Were it not that all of you exercise great forbearance you would vote him some further chastisement to make him hold his peace. Thankful are you that it happens to be the well-to-do boy: the other one, poor wretch, whose only change of raiment is on his back, and whose shoes are ever coming off, and need a shuffling gait to keep them on, you could have forgiven anything, and would rather have yourself suffered than seen him hurt. However, a start is made, the dragoman and attendants having pacified the fellow by telling him candidly he had no business to outrage the feelings of the party. By and by the tears have been dried up, and the past apparently in a fair way of being forgiven and forgot: you are surprised and pleased to see the chastised showing signs of a hungering after a renewal of the chastiser's smile: in the course of the next mile or two all friction has disappeared, and the party is itself again.

This reconciliation has been helped, no doubt, by the

sight you witness before quitting the glen. In this lonely part you suddenly come upon a family party consisting of father, mother, and infant : they might be the Holy Family. First comes the mother, seated on a donkey, and surrounded with much bedding. In her arms lies the infant, seemingly asleep. Behind follows the father on foot. They are plodding along, without a word. The poor woman is evidently somewhat scared at the sudden approach of such a troop of horsemen : there is neither village nor house in the landscape, nor shepherd on the hill-side : but the sight of a lady in your party has reassured her. They pass on their way, and are soon gone ; and your benediction goes with them, the hope that they may escape the hand of the ruffian.

Across the great caravan-road—which passes northwards this way from the Plain of Esdraelon—you take to the hills. The aspect of the country here is quite different from what you have just come through : these wave-like hills and hollows, all so green, make you almost sea-sick to look at them, so suggestive are they of the rolling ocean. And they are as bare of objects as a sea from which the ships have passed : not a habitation ; not a fence ; not a tree to be seen. Down that long hollow descending to the right or south you look for some signs of human life, but there are none : there, if anywhere, is the paradise of the grazier, but no one seems to own it.

Your route lies over the hills, eastward. Nearing the summit, you come in view of some peaks immediately to the north : that is the hill called Karn Hattin, or the Horns of Hattin : it is pointed out as the locality of the Sermon on the Mount. In a very little while you have ridden far enough forward to see the Lake of Tiberias, ever so deep below. You need no arguments to persuade you that our Lord never toiled so far up as Karn Hattin to preach the Sermon on the Mount. It may be pleasing to some to think of the Divine Teacher as seated on that

elevated concave summit, with the mountain stretching gracefully down to the shore plain, and the lake lying peacefully beyond; but it is altogether too fanciful: no need to go so far up as that, for spots suitable for a discourse with His disciples.

The lake is disappointing in the matter of size: to look at it from here you would say it might be a mile long and half a mile wide—a pretty lake, in shape somewhat oval, the thick end towards the north. It is surrounded with high hills, like those on whose summit you now stand. All about is green: grass everywhere. And as you come forward, and begin to descend, Tiberias, with its white houses huddled together by the water's edge just below where you stand, comes in view; and you speedily perceive that if you have had some trouble in climbing recently, your experience is going to be reversed, and that very thoroughly. To descend by this old road, though the shorter way, seems hardly practicable: it looks like a channel cut for the pouring of water from the summit, no matter how perpendicularly, if only it takes it straight and rapidly to the bottom. You dismount.

An excellent road has been constructed here, but it zig-zags so widely that you resolve to keep to the old even-down track. The dragoman, however, has taken the longer way; and it would have been well for you to have followed suit. But you were so tired of the journey, and the steep road seemed so very much the shorter, that you resolved to risk it. Walking, or sliding, in front of your beast, with the reins in your hand, you find you are running a good risk of being rolled over by it, for it too is sliding, on all fours. Looking out for a convenient angle of the proper road, you cut across to make it; but neither is this a happy experiment. These weeds seemed nothing to wade through, but they turn out to be nearly breast high. An occasional bit of garden too, with a fence of a kind, has to be crossed. Altogether, by the time you make

the highway, both yourself and your beast have had quite enough of roughing it.

Even the highway grows tiresome after a while: the constant repetition of shocks to the back from the downward tramp-tramping for probably a whole unbroken hour begins to make you fear you may be compelled to lie down on the road as you did long ago this forenoon on the flat boulder. By the time you get down to the back of Tiberias, and are passing southward behind its towered but shattered walls, you have thrown Zaid's reins over his neck, and are dragging yourself along in a very self-contained frame of mind, not caring whether he follows or not.

The tents are pitched, by the side of the lake, about a quarter of a mile south of the town: with dismay you learn that you have so much farther to go. Passing the west gate of the town, and continuing southward by the back of the wall, you skirt some mud-puddles—the rain washes the earth from the mountain-side, and it lies here behind the wall, and cracks, and grows very unsightly, besides producing malaria—and soon get round upon the open flat. Here the road from the south gate comes out. Continuing, you pass along the shore of the lake, a cemetery on the slopes on your right, and are very thankful when the only further effort you have to make is to pull yourself up, by the aid of the bushes, to the little elevated spot which is to be your home for the night.

Out on an expedition of this kind, it is surprising how soon the flagging energies revive: fifteen minutes stretched on your little bed you rise refreshed, and are ready to stroll back into the town. By a curious coincidence, a man whom you met on your way to the camp, and whom, because of his European aspect, you engaged in conversation, turned out to be a visitor at the very house you are about to go in search of to deliver a letter of introduction. You brought him into the camp, and he has patiently waited while you have rested, and now you are off together,

he to witness the surprise of his friend at seeing you, you to make the acquaintance of one more town, and one or two more people.

How delightful to walk by this lovely gravel-edged lake ! The road skirts the beach ; and you soon make the south gate.

Tiberias is a compact little town. Its streets are narrow, its houses mostly low, and as usual all flat-roofed. Scarce have you entered when you are in the bazaar. This is more like being in a building than simply passing through winding streets ; for the streets are roofed in such a way as to give one the idea of pacing corridor after corridor, hall after hall, passage after passage, the squatters seated among their goods on either hand as if set there for show. The bazaar is on a small scale, but quite extensive enough, considering its close roofs, to produce a feeling of chokiness. No doubt, in the summer time, when Tiberias simply frizzles in the sun, the covered ways are a defence ; but on the whole it might be better from a sanitary point of view were the streets exposed to the open air. It is not reassuring, though neither is it surprising, to be informed that only yesterday two fatal cases of diphtheria occurred. All the water the people of Tiberias use must be drawn from the lake. This, along the front of the town, the houses built right into it, is more or less stagnant, and is bound to be polluted.

Through the choky little bazaar lanes, and out into the alleys on the north side, you are brought to a standstill at a door, inside which, at the foot of a rather meagre stair, lie some boxes branded with names familiar to an Englishman. These at once indicate proximity to an English dwelling. Up the little stair, and you are soon ensconced in a European easy chair, while tea is being got ready.

After tea you are taken to call upon the European doctor, a friend of your friend's. His house is but a few paces off, in the direction of the lake. The mud in these

alleys is ankle deep—it has been raining recently. On your way you meet a lady teacher: the two or three English people here seem to live close by each other.

The doctor's house is quite palatial, in its way. Up one stair—you have no notion who lives on the ground-floor—you find yourself on a spacious roof. The back part of the building is continued a storey higher: this is the doctor's dwelling. The house-top on which you stand, stretching all along, is roofed, and enclosed at either end, but open towards the lake. You look out between the pillars which support the arches on which the upper roof rests. House and site are both picturesque: nothing could be finer than to sit on this broad secluded balcony—if such an extensive affair could be called by that name. You might sleep here, here take your meals—in fact live here. Your back is turned upon the town, but you miss little by that: the only picturesque objects in that direction are the minaret of the mosque, which rises prettily on the landward side of the town, and the occasional palm tree that helps with its refreshing greenness to cool the scene: from here you have the whole lake at your feet.

Tiberias is only once mentioned in the New Testament: St. John's Gospel says, "Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias"; and again, "There came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks." That is all that is said about Tiberias and the lake of Tiberias.

As has been suggested, the preponderance of the Roman element in this town in the days of our Lord, added to the fact that Herod sometimes resided here, would account for its not being much noticed in the Gospels: it is not said that Christ ever visited it, although He moved about a good deal in the neighbourhood of it. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, founded the city, naming it Tiberias after the Roman Emperor Tiberius. It was here that the daughter of Herodias danced.

Tiberias must originally have extended farther south, by the side of the lake, than it does now: remains of buildings and pieces of columns are found all the way down between here and your camp: indeed it would appear to have included the celebrated hot baths, which are still utilized, and whose white buildings, lying by the water's edge, are almost within a stone's throw of your tent door—although Josephus separates the two.

There is very little to see in the town. The mosque with its handsome minaret, as already noticed, is the most prominent feature. Add to this the venerable synagogue, whose arcaded front looks out so nobly on the lake, and you have exhausted the catalogue of notable buildings. The northern part of the town is rather dilapidated. Altogether, the impression you gather of Tiberias is that it is a stifling little hole, in which it would be impossible to breathe at all, were it not for the presence of the lake.

How the lake has grown since your first glimpse of it! Looking down from the mountain tops you inwardly expressed surprise: it seemed, as you said, about a mile in length. You now learn its real dimensions: its length is over sixteen miles, and its greatest breadth over seven. But in the matter of the desolation that seemed to encircle it, your original impressions are not much modified by closer contact. Between Tiberias and the lower end, where the Jordan flows out, there are no dwellings—with the exception of the baths' buildings. Beyond the river outlet—which you can only discern as a break in the mountains—there is, dimly visible, an Arab village by the water's edge. Besides that, there is nothing to be seen on the farther shore of the lake: sweep the prospect up and down, and all you can say about it is that it consists of a range of lofty green mountains, treeless, untrodden, reaching quite to the shore of the lake.

As to the coast north of Tiberias you cannot so well speak as yet: the lake widens in that direction; and the

town hides that particular portion from your present view: to-morrow you will know more about it. In the meantime your friend's boat—an English-built one, brought here with much trouble and at considerable expense—is in waiting under the doctor's house. You step into the handsome craft and take an oar; and in doing so, a whole sea of memories rushes into your mind—the fishermen, called, leaving their boats and nets, the walking on the water, the stilling of the storm, the miraculous draught of fishes, the stepping into a boat and thrusting out a little, as you yourself are now doing: of all the scenes you have looked upon in this land, none has brought you so immediately into the presence and companionship of Christ and His disciples as this one: to dip the oar seems almost sacrilege, a reckless intrusion into forbidden regions.

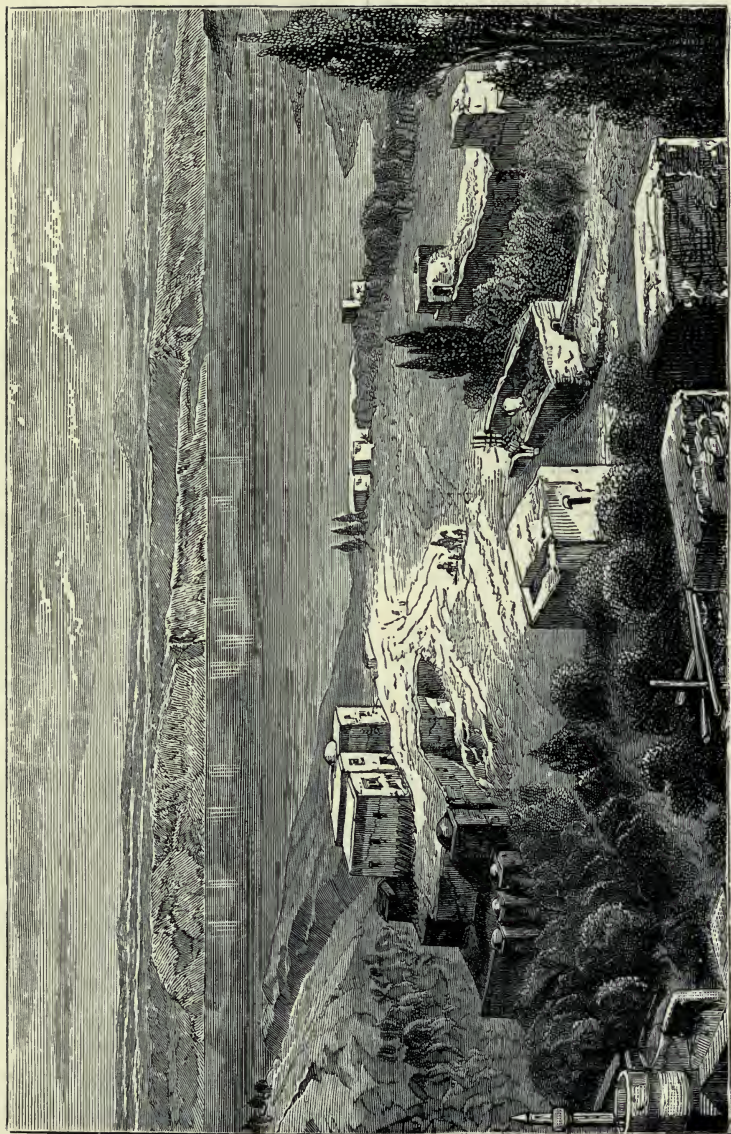
Your friend, by reason of familiarity, has evidently partially lost such impressions; for he sets about managing his boat in a most boatman-like fashion, and urges expedition, for it now draws towards evening. He is to convey you to your camp. The voyage is altogether too brief: what with the lovely evening, the placid lake, the gliding along—such a contrast to the rough and weary rides you have been having—you feel you could go on thus for ever: you sympathize with the Greeks, and appreciate the feelings which prompted the cry, “The sea! the sea!” But here is the camp: the boat's head is turned to the shore; and the keel grates over the pebbly beach.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAKE.

THE view from the camp in the early morning is a revelation. Singularly, you had never noticed, in all your wandering about the place yesterday, the one object that stands out pre-eminent: you can only stand and gaze with open mouth. There, over the lake, to the north—on the horizon, but apparently at no very great distance—lies the sheik of the mountains, Hermon itself, clad in snow. It is not a solitary peak: rather, it suggests a saw lying east and west, its not numerous but very large teeth pointing heavenward. The snow seems very deep, for the whiteness is unmarred; and it reaches well down the sides of the ponderous pile. The sight of so much snow, in the sharp early morning, and before breakfast, sends rather a shudder through your shattered frame. You turn away from the prospect, magnificent as it is, and seek the kindly cheer of the eggs and tea with which the waiter has just passed into the tent.

Breakfast over, the sun is already striking the hill-side above the camp, and you begin to feel fit for the start. To-day you are to do no riding: a boat has been hired, and fishermen of Tiberias are to row you about the lake, across to the other side, and round by the upper end to the locality of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, at which latter spot they will land you, the tents meanwhile being pitched there. Only three out of the half-dozen of



THE LAKE OF TIBERIAS.

you are to boat—two of the men and yourself: the doctor and his wife, and the accomplished horseman are to ride as usual, not caring to do the lake. The dragoman has arranged that one of the attendants shall accompany you on the cruise.

The splash of oars heralds the boatmen's approach: they are three in number, an old man, one middle-aged, and a capable-looking boy of probably seventeen. They are barefooted, and clad each in a blue cotton frock—their only garment. This garment is open at the neck and breast, and tied with a string round the waist; the sleeves are turned up; and preparations have evidently been made for wading. In a moment the boy has sprung on to the pebbly beach, and is standing in the water, pulling the boat round, so as to let you get easily on board. To-day you have only to sit or recline at ease: the boat is to be worked by its crew. The attendant who goes with you is clearly bent on making it a day of real enjoyment: the hubble-bubble is brought on board. This he carefully stows away forward; and, squatting within reach of it in the bottom of the boat, he draws a long breath, as much as to say, "Isn't this delightful?"

The old man takes the helm, and soon you are speeding up the lake, so as to pass in front of Tiberias in a slanting direction: the grey-bearded helmsman plainly is proud of his town, and he desires to show it to you in passing. You have thus an opportunity—better than last night's, for it was getting dark then—of taking in the beauty of the scene. Tiberias, seen from the lake, looks as if it had all rushed to the water's edge at once, the houses crowding each other in the endeavour to be first, like thirsty cattle.

And you now get a view of the coast north of the town. Here, as you observe, and as you might have observed yesterday on your way down the hill towards Tiberias, had you been able to take in just everything at once, the mountains recede, leaving a plain of no great extent—

some three miles long by one broad—along the shore, called the Plain of Gennesaret. At the south end of this, its back to the towering rocks, lies the poor village of Mejdél, the Magdala of old, whence came Mary Magdalene. From Mejdél a glen runs inland, that is westward, with cliffs on either side some eleven hundred feet high. Caverns are cut in those cliffs, and connected by passages, so as to make a regular fortress. Herod the Great, it is said, attacked the robber pest that lodged here, and to get at them had to let soldiers down in cages to the caverns in the face of the cliffs.

The old man now directs the boat's head towards the eastern shore. Having done this, he adjusts the half-shawl, half-handkerchief that serves as a cap and droops over the back of his neck, and pulling tighter the double ring of camel's hair rope that encircles his head and holds the kerchief on, settles down to take it easy. As he reclines on elbow, you have leisure to inspect him thoroughly. Decidedly handsome, of middle stature, slight build, and though somewhat aged and rather grey, still straight and lithe, he is a pleasant feature in the stern of the boat. The blue cotton gown becomes him well. Bare-legged, like the other two, he is prepared to descend into the water, should such be required, at any of the points where you land. So far as appearance goes, he might be another St. Peter: there is about his features and expression a certain refinement and intelligence befitting an apostle. The only thing that mars the ideal picture of the disciples' days—apart from the presence of the Western tourist—is the smoking of cigarettes: scarcely has the venerable helmsman finished puffing one when he is already proceeding to manufacture another: taking out his tobacco-box—which likewise contains the little book of papers—he extracts the necessary materials; and rolling up the pinch of tobacco in the leaflet, and folding the paper in at the thicker end, he beckons for a light from the cigarette

of one of the others. He is, however, sometimes far-seeing enough to set about making a fresh cigarette while the one he is engaged in smoking has still some little course to run, in which case he has the end of the old one wherewith to light the new. And how elegantly he handles the toy! Holding it, not by thumb and finger, but between his first and second fingers, he takes a few pulls, extracting copious draughts of smoke, which he sends forth again at leisure in clouds through his nostrils.

He can take his turn at the oar, too; for he has compassion on the boy, and exchanging places with him, lets you feel the impulse of his muscle in the progress of the boat. Still he smokes.

Nor is your attendant unmindful of his pipe: that hubble-bubble which has been a constant source of anxiety to him ever since you left Jerusalem, he has lit up, and is puffing away at with might and main. It is constructed out of a cocoa-nut. The kernel has been picked out piecemeal through the natural holes in the end, and the void has been partially filled with water. Into one hole the pipe-head has been inserted, and into another the stem or stalk. The pipe so constructed serves the purpose of a glass narghile, and is much more portable. Among the numerous other wonderfully ingenious arrangements that have come under your eye on the way through the country, none has struck you as at once so clever and so comic as the pocket hung by a hook on the white donkey's hind quarters for the conveyance of this particular pipe. Many a time have you smiled to yourself as you saw the poor fellow, wearied with constant walking, conduct the horse on which his employer sat—blue-petticoat himself always walks in front, his hands behind his back, and about three yards of string between him and the head of the horse he is leading—so as to get within reach of the donkey, for the pipe. To-day apparently the pipe will have little respite.

The lake gets slightly ruffled: there is hope of a breeze. The winds, they tell you, swoop down upon these waters in the most unexpected way: in a moment perhaps, when all is calm, and the boatmen are despairing of so much as a breath of wind, a veritable tempest strikes the boat, and before they have time to realize the situation, they are in the midst of a churning sea. The reason of these sudden squalls is no doubt to be sought in the fact that the lake lies so low: a storm may have been blowing across the mountain tops for some time, before it finds its way down to the water: a border of mountains a couple of thousand feet in height must have a considerable effect in conveying storms right over. But they do strike the lake sometimes; and when they do, they commonly take the boatmen by surprise.

The present ruffling of the smooth surface inspires your crew with the hope of being able to use the sail. The mast is raised, and all is put in order; and for a little while the boat seems to be making fair progress; but the wind dies away: it has been but a touch of a breeze which is probably even now blowing stiffly a few hundred feet above your heads. They take down the sail again, and resume the oars. But it is a long pull: seven miles with the oars is no light task: you are truly sorry for the men; and though they protest, you lend a hand.

Within a mile or two of the shore you begin to perceive that the mountain sides are by no means so smooth: seen from about Tiberias they looked grassy, with never a bush, much less a tree, to vary the monotony: but now you are discerning bushes many; and your eyes open wide, and you stare with astonishment, as tree after tree dawns upon your vision, bushy topped, wide-spreading, each casting a great shadow. And, nearer still, you begin to pick out black objects, not far beyond the shore. Are they animals? They are the black tents

of a Bedouin village. The flocks and herds grazing under the trees come by and by into view; and you are aware that you approach anything but the desolation you had expected to find.

Guides and guide books bid the traveller beware of landing on this shore. There are half a dozen of you, however, and the boatmen may be trusted to know their business; and so, they being willing to land you, it would be folly on your part to object. Moreover, if the truth were all told, you mean to land, and have meant it all along, even had you to go alone. So, with a long pull and a strong pull, the boat is grounded on the yielding gravel. The old man is the first to alight: tucking up his frock—he has neither shoes nor stockings to remove—he steps over into the water. The boy follows. Joining hands, they carry you between them—only a few paces—to land.

The narrow shore is reedy, the rich pastures beginning at the foot of the hills. Here, by the beach, are some bits of garden. A few of the male population show face, and stand gazing, as much as to say, “What do you want in our gardens?” But they seem disinclined to let themselves be interviewed, moving away and disappearing as you advance. This is Bashan; and those cattle browsing on the slopes remind you of the grazing that went on here in the days of old.

How delightful to dwell here! No English park, be its oaks ever so venerable, could be compared with these trackless slopes. This is, beyond all question, the preferable side of the lake: here you have the sunshine all day, and cover from it too. You enjoy the wander in this forest primeval, and it is with reluctant step that you return to the boat when the time of departure has arrived.

The boat's head now is turned towards the north end of the lake: you make a sweep so as to see the northern

townless shores and the in-pouring Jordan; and you land on the western shore at a place called Tell Hum, which some think must be held to be the site of Capernaum. Getting ashore is no easy matter: the wind has risen again, and waves are beating upon the stony beach. There is no gravel here: these stones are, many of them, big and sharp-edged; and it will be a work of time and danger for the barefooted boatmen to at once keep the boat from being damaged, and take it near enough to the shore to enable them to carry you out: it is pitching in a rather violent manner.

The boy is the first to descend. He has gathered his frock round his waste; but the waves soon drench him to the breast. And the sudden immersion, with the wind blowing so hard, makes him gasp for breath.

The other man follows, not deeming it of any use to tuck up. Holding on by the boat, and watching for the opportunity of a quieter moment, they manage to convey you ashore, though not without getting themselves hopelessly soaked. Nor have you yourself altogether escaped.

Tell Hum lies towards the north end of the lake—within some three miles of the mouth of the Jordan. The place is a total wreck, the result of earthquakes. Shaking yourself after your contact with the waves, and climbing up the stony shore, you penetrate the wilderness of weeds and bushes, and are soon stumbling over the scattered remains of what has once been a town of some importance. It is no easy task to hold your own among these slippery door-lintels, column-pedestals, and architectural fragments of all sorts and sizes, tumbled as they are topsy-turvy, and overgrown to a depth of four or five feet with weeds. There is no path of any description: you must search about on your own account. And fortunate are you if you escape unhurt. The heavy gentleman, who shares your tent, and whose attendant

it is that accompanies you to-day, has just gone tumbling like a log. He had thought himself securely perched on the edge of a slab of some size; but whether he had reached the end unexpectedly, or slipped off by the side, at all events he began to roll, and soon lay on his back, the tall weeds bending over his prostrate form as if in compassion. But he takes it good-naturedly, and leisurely rights himself again. The worst of a fall of that kind is, that you never know what you are going to strike next: if you saw you were coming upon a big stone you could make some move to stave yourself off it or at any rate to meet it; but the weeds hide all; and you can only be thankful if, trusting there are but weeds under, your trust is not disappointed.

It is interesting, however, to pass from one long stone to another examining their delicate carving, to jump from pillar-base to pillar-base, and to survey the whole in a general sort of way from any point of vantage. The most important remains are those you are in the midst of now: this is supposed to have been a synagogue. The only piece of building high enough to be visible over the weeds stands by the side of the lake. It is square, only one storey high, and of no great dimensions. Some goats have taken possession of the interior. The roof you mount, partly on account of the view it promises, partly because it seems a suitable place where to sit down comfortably and lunch.

A rather formidable-looking individual has been hanging about the ruins all the time. He is more elaborately attired than the peasantry; and a pair of pistols adorn his belt. He has gradually been drawing nearer, though apparently he hesitates to accost you. But now that you are seated on the roof of this ruin, and are beginning to attack the good things—of which happily there is a plentiful supply for boatmen and all—he has drawn quite near, and stands looking straight at the party. To all

appearance he is a man of some consequence: from his dress, you might suppose him to be the proprietor of a large tract of the district, out on the mission of looking after his workmen and his flocks. But there are no proprietors here. And then the place is so lonely that a single individual can hardly be supposed to have any business on hand, unless indeed the business of assassin or robber. This fellow must either be a robber or madman. However, something must be done: he cannot be suffered to stand thus watching every movement and grudging you every bite; so you pitch an orange to him. This he catches rather dexterously; and his next move is to mount the building, and seat himself alongside: he has evidently made up his mind that he would like to share the lunch. You do not deny him. He seems to enjoy himself, but he utters never a word—a madman no doubt. When you rise to go, he withdraws to the midst of the ruins again, and there you leave him.

Tell Hum may possibly mark the site of Capernaum: some think so. The reason that chiefly weighs with them is this, that St. Mark relates how that the people ran round the north end of the lake to meet our Lord who had gone by boat; and that this, the farthest north of these towns on the lake, would have been the most likely starting point of the crowd. Our Lord sailed to Bethsaida on that occasion—not the Bethsaida near by Capernaum on this side of the lake, but the other town of that name situated on the left bank of the Jordan, not far from its mouth, and called Bethsaida Julias—but it is not said that He set out from Capernaum. Besides, St. Mark states that the people ran together on foot from all the cities: it is idle therefore to speak of Tell Hum as the most likely city for them to go from on account of its being nearest to the top of the lake.

It appears not improbable that Tell Hum may have been Chorazin. The main plea for this view rests on the

fact that inland from Tell Hum there lie the ruins of a place called Kerazeh. Kerazeh is evidently a corruption of Chorazin; and a new town might have been built inland, up the glen, after the destruction of the old one by earthquake. The name being thus transferred, it would be necessary to give another name to the coast ruins: these may then have been named Tell Hum, Tell being the Arabic word for hill; and the new name may therefore have applied rather to the place than to the town.

As for Bethsaida the fishing village, it may have lain a little to the south of Tell Hum. You pass a place, on your way down the lake, which may be the site of that village: there are some ruins, a stream, and a mill.

A little farther south still, and you land at Khan Minyeh, the most probable site of Capernaum. Here the camp has been pitched; and it is grateful to behold the white tents again. You are now at the north end of the Plain of Gennesaret, Mejdal or Magdala lying at its southern extremity, some three miles off.

The landing here is easier than at Tell Hum: instead of an abrupt shore of rough stones you have a sandy beach; and the boat is run in within a step of the green grass. The tents stand some fifty paces inland. To reach them you have to exercise no little ingenuity: this is a labyrinth, quite: following a seeming path between some bushes, you find you must turn and try a different way; for the constant flow of water from the Fountain of the Fig Tree below the camp has rendered this place half marsh, half lake; and it is not so very easy threading your way through it.

The camp, you find, has been pitched on a very weedy spot: the rug under your feet in the tent seems padded, so soft and sinky is it. About the tent doors, however, and especially around the cooking tent, the strong growth of vegetation has been beaten down, and the place already begins to show signs of being reclaimed.

The Fountain of the Fig Tree you are not long in visiting: any chance of a drink of good water you never throw away. To-day you have drunk nothing: on the lake the boatmen helped themselves out of a tin, which they dipped over the side of the boat. The water of the lake did not look tempting, though it was moderately clear. You have now happily got beside a genuine spring, and drink your fill.

This spring issues from the base of a small precipice, which abuts at right angles upon the lake. True to its name, the fountain boasts a fig tree, whose branches overhang the waters as they force their way through between some huge boulders and blocks of rock. A few paces on, it is a little lake.

While standing here among the boulders a herd of cattle come trooping down, and rather unceremoniously wade into the clear pool, as near under the fig tree as they can get. The wading seems to delight them as much as the drinking; for they move about, and stand and look, and are not by any means dying of thirst.

To explore the locality you stroll to the top of the precipice: a path leads up, a little way inland, along the face of the cliffs at whose base is the fountain, and round above the lake. A caravan of some half-dozen men and beasts has just descended, and after drinking has passed on southward by the plain. One of the beasts, a small donkey, chanced to fall, just where the path comes on to the face of the cliffs. The poor animal was so heavily laden that it was unable to rise: it lay until the muleteers lifted the sacks off it. And while it lay, the path was blocked. It so chanced that, close behind it, rode one of your party, returning from the supposed site of the fishing village Bethsaida. What an outcry there was! And it was no satisfactory position to be in: the way is but a rocky path, unfenced, and dangerous even for a pedestrian, unless possessed of a good head for heights. But all

ended well: the horse stood quietly while the donkey was being set agoing again. Had it begun to dance about, however, and back, there might have been a catastrophe.

On your way up to the foot of this rocky path, you look into the ruins of the khan from which the place takes its name. These ruins, a ponderous mass of building, only two storeys high, but enclosing a spacious quadrangle, and comprising many apartments, the walls recalling by their thickness the old castles of England, are now abandoned to the cattle that stray down this way attracted by the spring. It is getting towards evening, and a witching feeling comes over you as you penetrate this vast red-stone barracks: from each weed-crowded nook there seems to look forth the ghost of some muleteer who haunts the place, ruminating on the chances and changes that time brings in its train. It is manifest that Khan Minyeh must at one period have been an important station on this the great north road. Lying as it does at the north end of the Plain of Gennesaret, with ample space for the beasts of burden, and plenty of water for man and beast, it would tempt the north-going traveller to rest and be thankful, reserving the toils of climbing until the morrow; and those coming south would regard it as a fitting temporary end of much rough hill work. Khan Minyeh must have been a spot well-beloved by the thousand and one muleteers accustomed to pass to and fro this way: it would be often looked back to, wherever they went.

Leaving the ruins of the khan on the left, you turn to the right—you are in the corner, where the hills that bound the plain have curved towards the lake and are about to push on to it—and begin the ascent of the rocky path. It is a most singular piece of workmanship. Were it not that you know the history of it, you would have a good deal of speculating as to what it could originally have been intended for. As you ascend, you find that the

path has been cut out of the solid rock. About one pace wide, and breast-deep, it gives the impression of having been intended as a piece of fortification: you think how suitable it would have been for archers to have shot from: themselves perfectly protected by the solid rock, and perched some two or three storeys above the plain, it would have been easy to repel a very large force approaching from below.

Others, again, would see in it simply a pathway. But they would be at a loss to account for its being made so narrow: a mule, or even a donkey, laden broadwise could not possibly traverse it: it would be worse to get through than the path between the jagged rocks near Samaria city where the white donkey distinguished itself.

The truth is, it was a water-channel. And of the engineers of those days it might be said as the gravedigger in the play says, "They built for eternity." The water would come from the stream that drives the mill, by the probable ruins of Bethsaida village; and, although the portion of the works that would stand here, being built and not of solid rock, have disappeared, there must have been a channel to convey the stream down the edge of the plain; for it was intended for irrigation purposes. There may be—who can tell—a channel still to be unearthed: it may not improbably skirt the hill-side the whole length of the plain, but is hid, having been covered by the gradual deposit of soil from the hill-sides.

You wander along this rock-cut channel, looking down upon the lake: you climb out of it, and descend the bushy bank to the shore: you return to it, and sit down by a grave, which from the number of rags of various colours suspended on it on bits of stick, is a very marked feature of the near landscape. Who lies here? It is a rather fascinating final resting-place: the waters of the lake make music on the stony beach below, the passing muleteer piously steps aside to add his tribute of rag, and

the birds come to behold and admire the medley of colours. It is but a cairn, enclosed with a dry-stone wall, which you easily step over. Sitting down, you wonder what may not the history of this individual's last moments have been, who presumably perished here by the way, like Rachel on the road to Bethlehem.

Returning, you pause at the broken part of the rock-cut channel, where the donkey fell, to look down upon the camp. How sweetly it smiles in the corner! On its left rise these cliffs on which you are perched—the fountain is directly below you. Before the tents lies the marsh, beyond which stretches the lake. At their right begins the far-reaching plain. Behind them are the ruins of the khan, backed again by the steep hill-side. If Capernaum stood here, it cannot have been a large town—unless indeed, which is quite possible, it was built on the slopes as well as on the plain. But the site possesses one of the characteristics of Capernaum: it has a fountain, which is more than Tell Hum can boast of. On the other hand, Tell Hum possesses, as you have seen, ruins of considerable grandeur, whereas there is nothing of the kind here, the khan though ancient being yet modern compared with the buildings of our Lord's day. Nevertheless, the stones used in building the khan may have been taken from the remains of this town. Altogether, this place seems to have better claims than any other to being regarded as the site of Capernaum: that town is spoken of in connection with the Plain of Gennesaret; it was near Bethsaida—which would be the case if Bethsaida village is represented by the ruins adjoining the stream half a mile northward on the shore of the lake; and finally Josephus' remark as to "the fountain of Capernaum which irrigated the Plain of Gennesaret" would seem to settle the question. If this be so, then Capernaum stood here, Bethsaida village half a mile along the shore, and Chorazin a couple of miles farther on. At all events, the shore of

the lake for these two or three miles was the scene of very much of our Lord's activity : He would know every feature of the locality. And these, in the main, are the same now as they were then.

But the dew is falling, and the long grass and rank weeds are getting wet : you make for the tents.

By dinner-time it is quite dark. And lo, the marsh is alive : never was there such a croaking of frogs since the days of Pharaoh : they evidently mean it for a serenade, appreciating the compliment paid to their neighbourhood. But they must be in numbers sufficient to form a plague, were they to come forth. The sound, kept up without a suspicion of intermission, might issue from ten thousand crow-mills worked by steam. Scarcely can you hear yourself speak.

Nor is the frog the only creature possessed of uncomfortable self-assertiveness here : the flies, not very large individually it is true, but in bushels, keep pouring into the tent, attracted by the light ; and already the table-cloth is black with them ; and the candles are almost extinguished : every now and then you have to remove a deep black ring of fly carcasses that have got singed, and stuck in the down-pouring grease. To watch the candles is like noting the deepening snow as the multitudinous flakes keep falling, on a winter's day.

The creatures compel you to swallow them even : falling thick upon the table-cloth, and rendering it black instead of white, it is impossible but that the dishes should be covered in like manner—though fortunately the colours there do not contrast so sharply, nor are the candles favourable to a minute inspection.

The meal, it need hardly be said, is not dwelt upon unnecessarily : you are all soon satisfied. The dragoman, too, would cut short your day's reminiscences : he has just been here to say how desirable it is that you should retire early to your several tents, the reason being, so he alleges,

the likelihood of thieves lurking about : his picture of a figure, veiled in the darkness, running from under a bush—as he expresses it—and helping itself to your bag, is not pleasant to think of.

Thieves or no thieves, you manage to sleep soon and soundly : the frogs probably helped to sing you into slumber ; and as for the flies, you put them to flight by burning a little mosquito powder, whose aroma, by the way, had the soothing effect of incense

CHAPTER XVIII.

TO THE WATERS OF MEROM.

THE morning has dawned, and another glorious day promises to smile on your northward journey.

Leaving Khan Minyeh, your route lies not up the rocky channel, but right over the hills a little way back : you scale the slopes in the corner, behind the khan. It is a stiff climb at first, as there is no path ; but once well up, it is comparatively level. You soon reach a glen, which strikes up to the left. Climbing the floor of this glen, you come suddenly upon a party of Circassians. Four in number, they are reclining among the dense grass under some trees, a little to the left. Their horses stand alongside.

It would be interesting to know where those fellows have come from : it is barely eight o'clock ; and had they not started at an unearthly hour they would not have been wanting to rest now : they must have been at it all night : evidently they have come off some enterprise of darkness. And they look fit for anything : as cut-throats they are gems of the first water : you can see it in their hard faces : were you quite close to them you might smell blood. And a curious sight it is, to see ruffians of the blackest dye got up as horsemen, armed, and possessed of fiery steeds : to the Western mind Bill Sikes would be a gentleman if he owned and rode a good horse : he would be the hero of the hour, a modern Claude Duval whom society would pet and fete. But you feel no longings in

the direction of canonizing these fellows here : you keep a sharp eye on them : the dragoman too, although saying nothing, evidently has his own thoughts. And so you pass on, working up the glen ; and by and by, turning to the right, you mount on to the plain or table-land, where stands a large khan, and where numerous individuals are moving about : this is civilization again, in a way.

But the baggage follows. And the dragoman's thoughts are on the two poor muleteers, who shall shortly pass up the glen, and probably be stopped and plundered. His first action, therefore, on arriving at the khan, is to give information, and request that a party be despatched at once to the spot : they will then at least—so he argues—be able to identify the four, should anything disagreeable happen.

You enter the khan, not to stop, but out of curiosity. It is called Joseph's Khan, the belief having been current at one time that it was here Joseph was let down into a pit by his brethren. But you have already seen Dothan, where no doubt the real scene of the pit incident lies. They show the pit here, however : you look through a hole of considerable size near the base of the outer west wall, into a great cistern underneath the building. This morning it is full of water. You shudder to think how horrible it must have been to have been let down into one of those slimy dungeons. But the people of these parts have been addicted to this method of imprisonment : just as at the present hour the boys about Jerusalem are very ready to throw stones, these weapons lending themselves so plentifully and so conveniently, so was it with the cisterns : it is sad to read in the sacred page how that they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon, letting him down with cords—a dungeon in which there was no water, but mire, the prophet sinking in the mire.

This is a khan of considerable proportions : the quadrangle is redolent of herds of cattle ; while the building

itself, which contains many apartments, is alive with human beings: altogether the place reminds one of a beehive.

And outside in the plain are many field-workers, busy hoeing. This is a homely picture, after the desolate region you have just come through.

Turning from the khan gateway—which looks north—you proceed north. The plain is of no great extent, probably of the width of a good-sized field, and several fields in length. It is bounded on the west side by hills. Your road lies along the east side; and to your right lie the lower lands: you are up among the hills, though on a plain: not very far to the east, and parallel to your route, flows the Jordan.

From this plain you pass into another desolate region. Many are the ups and downs you have before emerging from the mountain fastnesses and looking down upon the far-reaching flat in whose midst lie the Waters of Merom. The most striking part of the way is where, after descending into a vast grassy glen, and crossing it, you work up the farther side, your path winding among big boulders, and the summit of the pass seeming a hopelessly long way off. This is a very dreary and tedious portion of the journey. But it is not altogether unenlivened either: here are a few black tents; and the Bedouin women are milking the goats. One of these matrons carries a dish of cream. The dragoman, ever on the alert to get a pleasant surprise for you, proposes to purchase the dish. But the Bedouin has other uses for it, and declines to negotiate. Though disappointed, you are glad to think that those people are in a position to refuse money. And after all, to them the cream would probably be of more use than money.

Those are lofty and rugged cliffs on the left. But far up you can discern the black goats, perched on shelves, like ornaments on a colossal wall. And the Bedouin children, too, are climbing among the goats—all together a happy family. That bigger boy makes music after a

fashion with a pipe, as shepherds in all time have done. You could linger here, and rest a while, gladly forgetting the outer world.

Farther up you meet a caravan. The laden beasts come single file, every two or three having a driver, who walks alongside, beguiling the tedium of the journey, and making the cliffs re-echo, with a succession of shouts. On the bales of goods you can decipher the name *Beyrout*: the caravan has apparently started from that place. Where they are bound for does not appear: they can hardly, however, be going much farther south, otherwise it would have been easier to have taken the goods by sea to some port south of *Beyrout*, say *Haifa* near by *Mount Carmel*. But who can tell? At all events they are a merry party. One after one, as they pass you, they offer friendly salutations, holding out the hand for tobacco. Sturdy fellows they are, and no mistake, walking with a jaunty, elastic step, although they have probably been on the road for several days, and doing their twenty or more miles a day. Dressed in the usual blue cotton petticoat and small jacket or sleeved waistcoat, and with the flowing kerchief on the head, they are as like each other as blue-bottle flies, and not unlike these. When the last of them has passed, you begin to feel the solitude of the scene again, and could well have wished they and you had been going the same way.

But light breaks upon the prospect at last: you stand on the lofty table-land, and look forth over the vast plain below, where lie the Waters of Merom. From this point it is an easy journey down the side of the mountain range that forms the western boundary of that great plain.

At the first glance you are struck with the similarity between the contour of this plain and that of the Lake of *Tiberias*: as in the latter case the lake is hemmed in by mountains, so is it here: were the plain a lake, the two lakes would be twins. The extent of both is about the

same ; the shape about the same ; the arrangement of the surrounding mountains about the same ; and in both cases the Jordan flows in by a gorge from the north, and out again by a gorge towards the south. The only difference is, that here the water is wanting : the Waters of Merom, though some four miles long and three broad, are but a meagre substitute for the well-filled Lake of Tiberias : seen from here they are but a pool.

And there stands the stupendous pile of Hermon, in all its glory, right in front of you, at the north-east end of the plain : genial as the sunshine here is, the sudden sight of so much snow, and that so near, sends a shudder through you. But Hermon is not so near as it looks.

Before beginning the descent to the low grounds, you pause to admire a new village on the hill-side on your left. It is a colony ; and the whole place is so enclosed with walls as to form practically a stronghold. The district about here, it appears, is a promising field for vine culture. Were it not that the situation is decidedly remote from civilization, this would be a tempting spot for an enterprising emigrant : to dwell here would be to enjoy a perpetual holiday, with the prospect, moreover, of accumulating wealth.

It is not far to a delightfully clear spring on the plain. Here you rest and lunch. With the exception of Elisha's Fountain at old Jericho—which is on a small scale—this is the first experience you have had of a stream flowing out of the mountain base full-grown. A few paces below where you sit, the water is pouring out into a biggish pond ; and fifty paces out into the flat stands a mill, whose wheel is turned by the newborn stream. The mill is but a few feet below the level of the pond ; and you wonder how, in the absence of a sufficient fall, the wheel is turned. To your surprise and admiration you find, on stepping over to have a look at it, that the wheel is placed horizontally, and works away right diligently. Really the Oriental, for ingenuity, would be hard to beat.

The ride to-day has been rather more fatiguing than usual; or, it may be, you are growing less able to stand fatigue. At all events you would fain have halted on reaching the plain; and there was a spot a mile or so back, which the dragoman said would do; but the water supply was poor; and so to enjoy this famous spring, known by the name Mellāha, you dragged yourself into the saddle again, and endured a somewhat rough ride along the base of the mountains. But this repays you for it all: to sit on this rocky slope, amidst such gigantic pieces of fallen cliff, and look down into the clear pond, and over to the busy little mill rattling away as if it enjoyed its work, is pleasure undiluted. Even the horses enjoy it: they have had a drink, and now they nibble the green pasture on the open bits between the fallen rocks, and grow so frisky that they fight, and it is a work of time to separate and extricate them out of the entanglement they have intertwined themselves into.

Not many animal curiosities have crossed your path during these journeyings: or, to put it more correctly, not many such have come under your observation. To-day is an exception. Here, on a robust wild plant, is a creature of the size of your open hand, green like the leaves it is half hidden among, and with bead-like projecting eyes which seem to speak volumes: it is a chameleon, and a remarkably fine specimen. As you stand gazing at it, it appears as if struck helpless: it makes no attempt to escape: here it waits, clinging motionless with feet and tail to the stalk of the plant. Its body is long and deep but narrow: otherwise it resembles a lizard, to which genus indeed it belongs.

Ignorant of the creature's habits, you refrain from touching it with your hand, though its lovely colour, and clean leathery-looking skin, invite you to take it up and fondle it. But you try to induce it to transfer itself to your stick. By dint of gentle manipulation you succeed

in this ; and cautiously withdrawing it from above the green leaves, just to see whether it will change colour, you are half delighted, half horrified to mark its very apparent and rapid assimilation to the shade of the stick to which it clings : the dark colour of its body has succeeded the bright green with all the promptness of a blush. The chameleon has whiled away a not unprofitable quarter of an hour : you would rather make the acquaintance of some more of its kind than meet again the dreadful blood-sucking hornet—if such be the insect's proper appellation—which has taken you by the throat oftener than once in a rather unceremonious fashion. The first occasion was one afternoon in Jerusalem. You had ascended to the house-top and were leaning idly over the parapet, gazing down into the Pool of Hezekiah, just below the hotel, on the east. The reflection of the houses, whose walls descend right into the pool, was so vivid, notwithstanding the muddiness of the water, that you had glided into a reverie, thinking over the foul realities that may lie hid under a fair exterior ; when lo, something sharp, as if it were a worn or torn fragment of your collar, starched to the *nth* power, and ironed to a point, caught the skin of your throat. It made you wince ; but you were prepared to let it pass, on the above supposition : you were to be more careful in turning your head, until such time as you descended to your room and put on another collar. But the first prick had been merely tentative, acute enough as it was in all conscience : the second was as though a pair of pincers had been applied to the skin, and the bit nipped out. Now your suspicions were awakened : grasping at your throat, you caught the creature between your finger and thumb, and squeezing it violently, dropped it on the cemented pavement. It fell a burst blood-bag, and your hand was smeared red. From that day you have been on the alert, ready to pounce, at the first warning.

Two or three small boys from the mill have drawn near

to see the sight. Probably a chameleon would be nothing rare in their eyes; nor was it, perhaps, their intention to maltreat the gentle creature: you take the precaution, however, of carrying it a considerable way up the mountain face, and deposit it behind some rocks, so as to place it beyond the urchins' reach.

The remainder of the day's journey, which lies along the foot of the mountains, is uneventful. The only excitement—and it is but mild and short-lived—is caused by the horses: these begin to neigh and caper, and make as if they would scamper off into the far meadows: the sight of quite a troop of their own kind sniffing the wind, and flying like winged things, is too much for their feelings: they would fain be off to join in the sport. The herd is approaching like a whirling cloud of dust. Perceiving the danger—for the poorer of the horsemen among you would likely have come to grief—the dragoman advances at full gallop to meet the foe. By a vigorous application of the whip he succeeds in scaring them away. After this, there is peace again; and you ride forward, still by the foot of the hills, soon coming upon a village of black tents. These lie on your right: you pass, that is, between them and the hills. A few children have come out to meet you, demanding baksheesh. It is curious to watch the expression of these youngsters' faces, and to note the tone in which they beg. At the first sight, you would say their attitude was one of defiant demand: the way in which some of them accentuate and lengthen the last syllable of the word "baksheesh," is particularly calculated to produce this impression. But timidity, on the whole, predominates: just give a straight look, a kind of stare, at any one of the clamourers, and he will immediately prepare to flee. Having experimented thus, of course you reward him, and send him away with the smile on his brown face.

There is little stir about the village. Your road, how-

ever, lies by the back of it : the tent doors are all towards the plain, and the marshes in the distance. A few women have come out, and are standing behind the tents. No wonder ; for it is but seldom any Europeans pass this way.

A little farther on, and you come in sight of your own tents in the meadow. The arrival in camp is always grateful : perhaps it is a trifle more so this evening than usual, owing to the monotony of the journey ever since you descended to the low grounds. The wind, too, has risen, and threatens to blow a gale ; and you long to be under cover.

Striking to the right, among some trees and bushes, you ride towards the meadow by the north side of a mound which proves on inspection to be a cemetery. Like all the rest, it is quite unfenced. Below, on the left or north side is a marsh or pond. Your tents lie a hundred paces forward, on a grassy flat. All about is grass : the whole plain is a green field—although towards the middle it grows marshy, and if you were to penetrate far enough you should find the Jordan, partly a stream, partly a succession of swamps. But here the ground is hard and dry ; and no better camping ground have you anywhere encountered all the way. The turf is old and fairly dense, and the grass is short ; and neither bush nor stone intrudes : nature and the grazier have combined to clear the ground for you : it is all that could be desired.

But the attendants are having a rough time, owing to the high wind : the tent pegs and cords are equal to a very considerable strain, but to-night additional precautions have to be taken : a coil of rope has been produced, and the heavy hammer is at work on large stakes, such as are used in the West for palings ; and each tent is to be held down bodily as under a rope cage.

Already a number of natives have appeared on the scene. Some of these have brought eggs, some fowls, and

others have arrived to see what is going on. And here comes a horseman. Is he friend or foe ; for he carries a long spear, and rides in haste, either as if bent on speedy attack, or as the bearer of urgent tidings. His dress, as you perceive now that he draws near, marks him as one of the well-to-do ; although, after all, he presents a somewhat tawdry appearance. Evidently he has got himself up for the occasion : those pistols in his girdle, and especially the spear he has taken the trouble to bring, are unmistakably meant for effect. As he came dashing on, down by the little cemetery, you half thought of calling the attendants to receive cavalry ; but the smile on his dark visage, and the cordial greeting that immediately ensues between him and the dragoman, set all doubts at rest : he is an old acquaintance, come to pay his respects. It turns out that this visitor is the son of a sheik in the neighbourhood ; and the special tie that binds him to the dragoman is the fact that on a former occasion, some twelve years ago, when Joseph was passing this way at the head of a party, the sheik's son's marriage festivities were in full swing, and the travellers were invited to partake of the good things, always profusely abundant on such an occasion. Whether he had learned that Joseph was here, or whether he has arrived on speculation merely, you do not ascertain : perhaps he makes a point of calling on every party encamped here, in his capacity of lord of the manor. At all events, his joy is boundless.

Curious to inspect the spear, you beg him to let you have it in your hand. It is a rather rickety weapon ; and if meant to be used in attack it would be well to send it to the smith, for the first onset would infallibly decapitate it. But its dimensions are interesting : laying it on the ground, you pace it, and find it to be about fifteen feet long. Such weapons, you learn, when carried at all, are meant to take the place of the whip, whether for urging on any laggard of the flock, or repulsing a wild beast.

But you have never yet seen a new spear: they are invariably antique specimens, stock of the old curiosity shop, loose and rusty in the head, and cracked and bent in the body: they appear to be survivals, kept and cherished for old association's sake.

To-night you are spared the plague of flies, although on the edge of a swamp: the wind probably is too much for them. But the frogs are as eloquent as those at Khan Minyeh: what with their incessant chorus, the whistling of the wind, and the swaying of the tent, you are soon rocked to sleep. Many a time at home have you wished that Sancho Panza's man who invented sleep had likewise made provision for its being summoned at will: here, it comes unsought; and it would have fulfilled the conditions of Hamlet's eternal repose, for it never knows a dream.

CHAPTER XIX.

TO HERMON.

YOU awake to find the storm over, the frogs at peace, and nature beaming radiant. Though the morning air is a little sharp—you are above the sea-level now, and in a very different climate from that of Khan Minyeh—one of the party resolves to have a bathe in the marsh or pond by the cemetery hillock. He has waded in a long way, and, now getting reconciled to the cold, he tumbles like a porpoise and declines to come out. Breakfast waits ; so you hurry off to the tents. On turning to look back, you are horrified to see some twenty women and girls, apparently from the black-tent village you passed yesterday, swooping down upon the pond, each armed with a big jar. Wading in, like cattle come to drink, the troop soon cut off for a time the bather's return.

To-day again your route lies northward, along the foot of the hills. It differs, however, from yesterday's march in this respect that to-day you have much more water to contend with : the springs issuing from the hills seem to be innumerable : no wonder Jordan has a plentiful supply of water : all these springs go to swell its volume : trickling down to the meadow, and into the marsh, they pass on their way and eventually flow into the Waters of Merom, Jordan's reservoir. Water fowl, they tell you, are plentiful in the marshes—pelicans among the rest—and the cattle of the Bedouins love to lie in the wet in

hot weather. The place is teeming with life. It is probably too flat for draining; but were the springs along the foot of the hills guided into a stream, a vast tract of most fertile land might be reclaimed. As it is, you have difficulty in making your way along the foot of the hills; and as for the great plain it must be regarded as forbidden ground: you look out over it as over a treacherous bog that has hidden its waters and its depths among the reeds—a way by which no man may pass. And yet this has been a battlefield: in the Book of Joshua it is related how that Jabin, King of Hazor, and many kings with him, came and pitched together at the Waters of Merom, to fight with Israel. Hazor lay back among the mountains on your left.

Kedes, too, is up there: it is the Kadesh-Naphthali of Scripture, and one of the six cities of refuge. These, it will be remembered, were Kadesh, Shechem, Kirjath-Arba, on the west side of Jordan, and on the east, Bezer, Ramoth, Golan. Golan lay on the other side of the Waters of Merom—opposite to where you now are. Bezer lay to the south of Heshbon. The rest you have already spoken of.

The journey to-day turns out to be a matter of wading and fording: you have gone but a little way when you begin to encounter springs of more or less volume issuing or rather oozing from the base of the mountain range. One after another of these has to be crossed, waded through, or negotiated in whatever way you are best able to do it. The supreme struggle seems to have been reserved for the north-west corner: just where you begin turning to the right, in order to pass along the foot of the hills that skirt the north edge of the plain, you find yourself seriously meditating whether it would not be advisable to climb the mountain-side, and so get round on solid earth above the springs. But it all looks so green: you would declare it was a piece of good sub-

stantial meadow you had to ride over. And so you go on advancing, when to your surprise the horse sinks to the stirrups. Then the splashing commences: the poor beast gets alarmed lest it be caught, held fast, and swallowed up. After a great deal of violent exertion it succeeds in backing out, and is unwilling to try again. To meet its scruples you direct it towards the left, as if to go nearer to the foot of the mountains. And in this way you progress, though slowly. But, right up in the corner, it comes to be a matter of going straight through, sink or swim. Seldom have you felt so thankful as when, the last plunge over, your beast dragged its mud-besmeared body on to the hard ground, near by a farm: these last hundred yards have been dreadful: again and again were you on the point of taking a header into the mire: it wanted all your poor skill to stick in the saddle as Zaid kept plunging, rising for an instant, and again descending into the depths, its very nose striking the mud. You breathe freely when once more on solid earth. A stream has to be forded here—the *Derdāra*, the first of the four distinct components of the Jordan—but that is a trifling matter: a deeper and weightier torrent than this, so long as you have a firm basis to tread on, you would welcome as refreshing after the mud scramble you have just come through.

Beyond this point the route lies along the foot of hills again; but these are less steep than those you have been skirting hitherto: they slope very gently, extending far northward, and are thickly strewn with grey boulders. Some rows of these seem to mark the boundary between hill and plain. You ride along by the edge of this boulder belt; and soon pass behind a village of black tents. The children, as usual, are out in great force, intercepting your advance. As your horse struggles to find a footing among the boulders, which lie almost as close as causeway stones—you have here to leave the

plain, and take to the left, on to the mountain slope—these urchins, shouting baksheesh, are in danger of being ridden over: they will keep coming in the horses' way; or, perching themselves upon some boulder peak which they see you will have to pass, they crow at you like unearthly things. To look down the plain from here, it seems a vast meadow: you are now at the extreme north end of it; and the Waters of Merom look a dot in the far south. The Bedouins appear to have a happy time: the flocks and herds here can never lack either food or drink.

Still round the north edge till by and by a river intercepts your path: you now strike northwards, up the side of the ravine in which the river flows. Some rough riding brings you, at no great distance, to a bridge, a three-arched structure of stone, devoid of parapets, and somewhat broken in its roadway. You dismount and lead Zaid cautiously over: the stone-paved way is convex and slippery, and the least stumble might send both you and your beast over into the rocky bed below, where foaming and roaring rushes the Hasbāny, chief constituent of the Jordan if you estimate its importance by the length of its solitary course—though the branch that joins it from Dan boasts a larger body of water. This is a dreary spot: the rocky heights on either side cut off all view of the country without: you are glad to scale the rugged slopes, and get on to the high ground, hastening away from the ghosts that seem to dwell down there haunting the deserted bridge, seated on it like so many vultures gone to sleep after picking the bones of the dead.

This glen is the real Entering in of Hamath. Hamath was the Bible name for Hollow Syria, or as it is now called The Bekāa, that vast sweep of plain ten miles wide that runs between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and down which flows, in addition to the stream you have just crossed, the Leontes, which, turning west, a little above where you now stand, flows straight to the sea, debouching immedi-

ately to the north of Tyre. The other great river of Hollow Syria is the Orontes: it flows north, and after a long course westward empties itself into the sea shortly after passing the ruins of Antioch.

You now work your way down to the plain again, keeping a south-easterly direction, and soon reach in the corner the site of Dan. Here a third constituent of the Jordan—the largest of them all, as has already been said—takes its rise.

Dan must have been a wonderful town. None of it now remains; but the site is here, intact; and a singular site it is, something unique. Projecting from the foot of mighty Hermon is a flat hill, so level on the top as to force one to suspect that it must be partially artificial: to look at it, you would pronounce it a gigantic piece of engineering. The guide books give its dimensions as some three hundred and fifty yards long by two hundred and fifty wide, oval-shaped, and rising some forty feet above the plain. Riding forward to it from the north, Hermon rising immediately on your left, you come upon a broad but shallow stream. This you ford, and forthwith climb up on to the plateau. On this side it is not more than twenty feet high: it is at the west end, and on the south, that its slopes reach their greatest depth. At its eastern extremity, where it comes off Hermon, its height is not more than twenty feet either. But there it is, an oval plateau, protected on all sides by being elevated above the surrounding ground. If you could think of an oval hill which had had its upper half sliced off, such would be the site of Dan.

And most singular of all, the branch of the Jordan that comes from this quarter actually rises full-grown on the plateau: here was a town whose water supply no besieger could ever cut off: it had a river issuing from its own midst.

It is somewhat risky to penetrate the dense thicket of

trees and bushes that now covers the plateau, and from whose recesses you hear issuing the sounds of rushing water: you are content to stand on the edge at the west end—near to where the waters break forth—and look down into the midst of the jungle, where the white torrent leaps and struggles like a captive thing, mad to get free. They say the body of water issuing from this plateau is three times that of the Hasbāny—though you doubt it. They call it the Leddān, and regard it as the chief source of the Jordan.

Some animals are early set to work: some children are earning a living before they have well left the cradle: nor has this stream escaped from the plateau of its birth before it is captured by the hand of grasping man, and made to turn a mill-wheel. Like the contrivance you witnessed by Jacob's Well, where the stream from Shechem was carried along aloft and made to pour as it were down a chimney, so here: an aqueduct is carried out a little way, from the south-west corner of the plateau, and a slice of the river conducted along it and dropped down a hole into the mill. You pass alongside this stream, across it just before it enters on the aqueduct, through among some wide-branched trees, and so down the south slope to the plain. The place is deserted, all but for the mill. Two or three individuals, however, are prowling about on the top, and occasionally coming to the edge and looking down at you: perhaps they are tending some sort of flock, though that is rather improbable.

Dan was the northernmost town of the Israelitish kingdom: every one knows the expression, "From Dan to Beersheba." The original name of the place was Laish: the tribe of Dan, on taking possession, changed the name. The description of the condition in which the Danites found the people of Laish living is exactly what the nature of the locality would have led one to expect: "They came to Laish," it is narrated, "and saw the

people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man." Yes: this is a charming retreat; but slightly remote: the only town within measurable distance—for purposes of social intercourse—would be Banias, the Cæsarea Philippi of the New Testament; and it is an hour and a half's climb off.

Descending to the low ground on the east side of the mill, and turning to the left or east, you begin the ascent of Mount Hermon. At first it is a gentle slope, the path penetrating a wood of young willows—have these always been young? The Dan mound lies on your left. Soon you have ascended beyond it, and can look down upon it. The more you gaze upon that singular site the more are you at a loss how to account for its formation. Giving up the question as impossible of solution, you let your eyes wander beyond to the wide well-watered plain, with its meadows and its thickets, and the lake in the distance. This is a goodly land.

Nor is the ground under your horse's feet to be despised: here is abundance of excellent grass. And a pretty stream, full to overflowing, gurgles and speeds on its way. Quite narrow, the long grass on either side, falling over it, almost conceals it from view. But its sound is soothing to the ear.

The path is steep; and often you must stoop to pass under a branch; for though the hill-side is not thickly wooded, there are many trees about. These slopes would be quite a popular destination with the excursion contractors of the West—the thick old turf, the open bits where the children could be seated mug in hand, to enjoy the good things provided for the feast, and to gaze forth over the wide meadow flats below, to the range of mountains which bound these on the west. Nowhere in all this land have you found such a delightful and cared-for-

looking neighbourhood—although after all, it is probably little cared for, the passing caravans but keeping the beaten footpath, and leaving behind as signs of the touch of man the broken branch here and there. Long and fatiguing as the journey to-day has been, you are still pressing on: lunch has been deferred in order that Cæsarea Philippi may first be reached; but the novelty of the scene has infused fresh energy into man and beast; and really you are in no hurry to be done with this pleasant part of the way. And so all too soon you have arrived at a level piece of meadow, in the middle of which flows a bulky stream. You ride by the north edge of this meadow; and as you look down upon it, you observe what seems to be a bleaching work. There are also one or two good houses. Cæsarea Philippi is at hand: these are the outskirts of it. On the farther side of this flat is a ravine, down which another stream rushes violently, making for the plains below. These two streams, uniting about here, form the fourth and last constituent of the Jordan: it is called the Banias. The other three are the Derdāra, the Hasbāny, and the Leddān.

The path takes a bend round the east side of the meadow whose north side you have been skirting for some little time. Just at the bend, you cross the stream and find yourself among the cottages of Banias. These, with their gardens, are well-nigh hidden among the trees. You ride through the meagre village, the old women gaping from their doors, and some children and fowls scampering out of your way. Arriving at the farther extremity of the village, you find you have descended somewhat and are now by the south gate of the place. You ride forward as if to pass on and depart—but your route does not lie in that direction. Passing under the handsome arched gateway, you stand on a bridge which spans the rocky ravine down which the southern stream leaps and bounds. After lunch you mean to return to this spot. Re-entering by

the gateway, and making for the olive orchards at the back or east side of the village, you halt for a moment to watch the process of "throwing a horse." All the hands of the village, apparently, are here; and rather desperate-looking fellows they are. The horse which they are gathered round is the property of one of them; and the rest are lending a hand. The poor animal wants to have something about its leg cauterized. And here they are, like demons of the pit bent on torturing their helpless victim, red-hot iron in readiness. They have tied all the four feet together, and are now about to give the finishing touch, which will land the horse on its back. Down it goes, with a thud that reminds you of the fall of Homer's warriors whose armour "rang dry." It is not a pretty sight. But the healing art has never yet attempted to be æsthetic: to be anæsthetic is of more importance. With these poor reflections you move on, and climbing the ruins of the castle wall—within which the whole village seems to lie—you ride forward into a pleasant wood. Here the table-cloth is already laid, and the welcome lunch waits.

After lunch you take your tin and proceed to cross the rude stone-fence that skirts the north side of the wood. Crossing another fence to the left, you get into a footpath that leads from the village to the spring. Some fifty paces along this—still towards the north—brings you to the desired spot.

Never in all these wanderings have you met with such a surprise as at this moment. Here, right out of the face of the mountain, comes a full-grown river, quite twenty paces wide: It keeps up a constant sound like water poured into a frying-pan on a roasting fire. And such water! No taint here from fields above: there are no fields above: it is the mountain, towering far aloft: and this crystal water comes out of its rocky side.

Now you pass along, just above where the waters emerge. You stoop, and feel what sort of channels it comes

through. But there is nothing : you can detect no holes : the whole thing is a marvel. You drink for the thirst that may be to come. It occurs to you also to have the camp bottles washed out and refilled here. Never was there such water : it is the percolated meltings of the acres of pure snow that cap the monster mountain pile.

This stream flows out of a side of the hill that looks towards the west. Crossing to the farther or northern side, you at once come upon a cave, under a quarry-like face of the hill which looks south. It was by this cave that the sanctuary of the god Pan stood, after whose name the place was called Paneas, turned by the moderns into Banias. The earth has fallen from above, and filled up the floor of the cave, especially at the entrance ; and the spot, though there are marks indicating the presence of worshippers at one time, is now neglected, nettle-grown, and devoid of any path by which it might be approached : you must climb over a dry-stone wall, which partially gives way behind you.

Backing out of the cave, and getting to the river edge immediately below, you move westward, and climb the steep rocky face : a broad shelf, some sixty or eighty feet above, is your destination : there stands a whitewashed, domed little building, with a one-arched open front, from which the view must be enchanting. The climb is not difficult, though you want to be careful : some of the steps you have to take are high enough ; and it does make one a little giddy to look down to the river bed : but you must get up, at whatever risk. Puffing and blowing, you feel you have triumphed when you step on the terrace. Here are some children at play. The building, you discover, consists of two parts : the western or outer portion is open, only roofed ; while the inner, a step up, is a room, in which is a tomb, a mound of building scarcely the length of a grave, rising about a couple of feet high, and semi-cylindrical on the top. It is covered with green

cotton cloth, and is moreover decorated with rags of various colours. This is called the tomb of St. George. This shelf must always have had an irresistible attraction for strangers coming to Banias: no one would be about here without coming up. And it can be reached by road, if one takes the trouble to go a little out of the way.

It would most probably be up here that our Lord came, with the three, to be transfigured before them. Certain it is, He had arrived at this town shortly before that event. "After six days," it is recorded, "He went up into a high mountain," and so on. This does not necessarily mean that He went to the top of the mountain: He may have gone but a little distance up the mountain. To suppose that He had gone to the awful top of Hermon would be beyond all reason. This point, however, He presumably would visit; and this is height sufficient: it would be quite removed from the din and the observation of busy Cæsarea Philippi below; and the distance off would just suit the requirements of the case; for after the transfiguration, He came down into the town, and found a crowd around the disciples, and the father of the deaf and dumb child that was possessed of a devil. It is not said that our Lord and the three went up from Cæsarea Philippi, or that it was in Cæsarea Philippi that this miracle of healing was wrought. It is stated, however, that they came to that town; and that after six days He went up into a mountain. It is perfectly possible that in the course of those six days He may have gone away south again, and by the end of that time may have reached Mount Tabor. But it is a long journey to Tabor: that mountain lies on the farther side of Tiberias, beyond the lake altogether, and well south towards Jezreel. Why may they not have spent the six days about Cæsarea Philippi and the adjoining places? Why should they come so far north, to turn almost immediately and go south again? And moreover, supposing Tabor to have

been the scene of the transfiguration, what town, pray, lay at the foot of it? And, then, it is said that the child often fell into the waters. There are plenty of waters here, but none about Tabor.

With Peter you are ready to exclaim, "It is good to be here": were this spot in the West it would be designated Belle Vue, Schöne Aussicht, and what not: and the whitewashed Muslim wely would be tabernacle sufficient.

But you must move on. Reluctantly stepping down from the pleasant perch, where you feel you will never set foot again, you come gently and not without caution from shelf to shelf till at length you stand once more by the river brink. The hissing waters have still an attraction for you: it seems so odd to witness the very beginning of a goodly river. You drink again, and linger, unwilling to proceed. But time passes, and the village yet remains to be inspected.

Returning to the olive wood by the way you came, you pause for a moment to admire the fine trees. Then the castle wall, which skirts the wood on the west, and forms the back of the village, demands inspection. What strikes you as most remarkable about the wall—after its thickness—is the fact that many columns are built into it, laid horizontally, their ends projecting slightly. It is common in the East to build columns into walls in that way: it is a form of ornamentation: you have noticed instances of it in the walls of Jerusalem. There is here, too, a fosse, deep and wide. The place has been very strong in its day.

Wending your way down again to the old gate and the bridge, you cross to the farther side, and take a general view of the lie of the town. They tell you that Banias must have extended to this the south side of the south ravine, because many remains of columns are found over here. In that case, it would appear, this bridge would lead originally not to the town but to the citadel; and

the space now occupied by the village would all be included within the fortifications. This seems probable ; for, in the first place, it is plain that the village stands on the site of the old castle ; and secondly, the space between the two rivers is too limited to have contained a town of any importance.

This is a rather gloomy little glen. Rocky in parts, the sheep nevertheless find grass to nibble on its slopes ; and on the north side, below the bridge, is a steep path by which the women of the south end of the village come to fetch water. A few paces below this the glen terminates, its north bank disappearing in the flat meadow with the bleaching works lying to the west of the village.

Some old women are seated at the doors of the cottages ; all is peaceful ; it is a rustic scene ; the place might be described as a garden dotted with trees and cottages, rather than as a village. What a change is here since the days when Herod the Great thought the place of sufficient importance to adorn it with a temple built in honour of the Emperor ! That temple stood over the hissing waters you are so much enamoured of. May not this temple, built for the Emperor, have been in Peter's mind when he spake of the three tabernacles ? Otherwise, why should he speak of building tabernacles at all ? Moreover this temple would be directly under his eye as he stood on the site of the wely.

Herod's son Philip, who died in the year of our Lord's crucifixion, enlarged Paneas, giving it the name of Cæsarea, after the Emperor. Philip's own name came to be associated with the town : by way of making a distinction between this and the other Cæsarea, people called it Cæsarea Philippi.

But here come the baggage mules : you hear the jingling of their bells. They are to pass right on, you are informed : the muleteers lunch without halting. And so you drag

yourself away from the delightful spot; and Zaid is waiting; and you get into the saddle once more, the attendant handing up your switch; and turn your horse's head to climb the mountains still farther. The day is waning; and you think of dear old Longfellow's song—you knew and liked him—Excelsior.

Truly it is not altogether without misgiving that you attack these great and terrible mountains, knowing as you do, that your bed to-night will be somewhere among them. It begins to get cold: probably the sight of leagues of snow affects the imagination; but certainly you are already a considerable way up, and it is far into the afternoon. You whip up poor Zaid, for his own sake no less than yours, and push on.

The way is steep, and you have to pause at intervals. This gives you an opportunity of taking a retrospect. The look down is grand. And now a new object has presented itself in the panorama: below, on the left or south side of the glen that skirts Banias, a round pond appears. Seen from here, it looks diminutive: you would say it was a disused circular quarry, or a circus flooded with rain. Its diameter, however, is some three-quarters of a mile; and they say it is the crater of an extinct volcano. Some have supposed this to be the source of the stream that descends by the south side of Banias; but this appears to be unlikely, inasmuch as the water of the pond is bad, while that of the stream is excellent. Yet, it is possible that the stream may come from this source: it breaks out from a spot which would answer well enough relatively to the situation of the pond. Birket (or Pool) Er Rām—for that is its name—though an interesting feature in the landscape, is not an attractive one: it is too suggestive of frogs and creeping things, with which they say it abounds; it also calls up horrible thoughts of suicide: it looks as if intended for drowning. Look far beyond it to the living Waters of Merom, and

the meadows where the herds graze, and the foot of the hills where the children play by the black tents.

And soon another strange object comes in view. This is the real Castle of Banias—a very much grander structure than the citadel once possessed by the town below, and whose ruins you have been inspecting; though neither was it to be despised. This castle is a marvel of marvels: many are the astonishing ruins that adorn the hill-tops on the banks of the Rhine; but none of them comes nearer to this than does a little boy to a giant. It lies on the flat top of a spur of Hermon. This spur rises perpendicularly to a height of some six or seven hundred feet above the valley which divides it from the main body of Hermon: it cannot be climbed except at one part, as the cliffs that form its sides are sheer, and even seem to project at the top. The fizzing waters of Banias issue from the west base of this hill. Consequently the Castle of Banias looks right down upon Banias. The journey up to it from the latter is a matter of an hour and a half's hard climbing.

The entire summit of the hill is occupied by the castle. A surrounding wall, following the shape of the flat summit, stands on the brink, built apparently rather for the purpose of preventing the inmates from falling over than to keep intruders out. This surrounding wall is little short of half a mile in length. The architecture of many ages is to be seen in the well-preserved remains. The building is oblong: in other words, the top of the hill is of that shape. The length is east and west; and the floor narrows perceptibly in the middle, almost as if the mountain at that part were a junction of two mountains: it is a pass from the one large space to the other: it is an isthmus.

The area, they tell you, is occupied by some rude dwellings, no longer tenanted. The space must be considerable: at either end of the isthmus lies an island, as

it were, of about a hundred yards in diameter. This castle is considered one of the finest ruins in Syria. Grey with age, moss-grown, altogether an old-world relic, it yet withstands the storms of Hermon; and the climb up to it, they say, is well repaid by the surpassing grandeur of the view. Even to look down into the ravine at the back or north side, where the wall has fallen outward, is said to be in itself a rare experience. The east island stands a little higher than the west; and, it appears, a drawbridge originally connected the two. Cisterns, of course, for the storing of rain-water, are found in the rocky floors. The place seems to have possessed every requisite for setting the outer world at defiance—except food. After all, cutting oneself off from one's kind, however magnificently it be done, has its drawbacks.

This castle, so say the guide-books, is seen to most advantage from the side of the mountain over against it on the north: you have to climb till about on a level with the pointed windows in the surrounding wall, or a little higher, and then you command a proper view. No doubt. But you find yourself speculating whether anybody has ever done that: it would be a rare feat in climbing: a man might pull himself up part of the way with the aid of the pines that clothe the mountain-side; but, above the pines, are sheer rocks.

Passing on, and leaving this majestic ruin behind, you keep ascending. When about to descend on the east side, you turn and take a last look at the ascent you have made, and the low country you have come from, and yet again the castle ruin. And now you ride down into a valley which opens southward. It has a stream and a mill; and its slender silver poplars are not the least striking feature of the landscape. The road is hard to find: each man seeks a path for himself. You happen to choose a route which, though pleasant at first, proves troublesome in the end: while skirting the east face of

the glen you manage to ride along tolerably comfortably ; it is the descending at the lower end that offers the difficulty. But you do get down ; and then mighty Hermon itself has to be faced. This is a steep pull up ; and, what is worse, far up right in front where the path seems to lead, there are fallen stones, and the sheer rocks begin. What then is your surprise to find here two or three small boys ? This is a fearful place for children to be in alone.

The boys soon announce their mission : they have got fossils to sell. And very curious many of the specimens are—great worms, so like living things that you shrink from their touch.

The unexpected presence of these children seems to cheer up man and beast : Zaid searches about for a path : hobbling over some rain-scooped ruts about a yard deep, and selecting the brink of one of them, he sets his shoulder to the hill. The boys run alongside, holding up their goods to view. This they do very adroitly with the one hand, while the other dips gently into your coat pocket. A guide-book, however, the only article there, is not much of a find, and cannot be abstracted without a certain amount of tugging. This attracts your attention, and you put your hand on the young pickpocket's wrist. At first you had no suspicion of theft : it appeared to you as if the little fellow had probably laid hold of your coat so as to get a pull up the hill. But the truth soon comes out : one of your two big boys—the one who got whacked as you journeyed from Cana—has raised the cry of thieves : he caught one of them attempting the white donkey's pocket. What treasures the donkey's pockets contain you have no idea : the only article of its burden known to you is the hubble-bubble belonging to your tent-mate's man. It, as already said, has a bag all to itself. This is hung by a hook on the donkey's pannier, near the hind-quarters ; and the pipe-stem sticks right up, visible to every eye.

But it is not the hubble-bubble the urchins would have : they feel about for more precious treasure.

The boy, however, is a match for them : he speedily lays the stick on the thief's back, and then proceeds to warn the party. The precaution is not by any means superfluous : such determined thieves are unknown in the West : these boys are not ashamed to be caught in the act : they hover near, to return at any favourable moment. Consequently the journey up this hill-face is encumbered with the gratuitous trouble of minding one's goods.

All unlooked for, a flat opens to the right, and you ride forward to the home of the young thieves, Mejdesh-Shems, a large and most picturesque Druse village perched on the mountain-side, a little way up, on your left. The snows seem to descend almost to the back of it. Forward, on the flat, stand the white tents. The whole population apparently, men, women, and children, are out to see the sight : it is as when in the West a circus or a menagerie has arrived in a village, and the horses and camels and the gilded cars are a wonder to behold. While the tent-pegs are being driven deeper, and the baggage laid out, you pace among the ropes with the feeling that you are one of the fellows who to the inexpressible admiration of the youthful provincial plays a trombone, or rides a prancing piebald steed in the grand procession. Nowhere have the people turned out to look, as they have done here. Not only is the camp area overrun with boys, against whose nefarious designs the precaution of strapping the baggage together has had to be taken, but along the edge of the road that skirts the meadow are rows of women, many of them possessed of rather striking features, seated, deliberately watching the proceedings, and evidently bent on seeing the last of it ; for it is getting towards evening, and the wind is piercing. There they sit : even now that it is almost dark they are still there, huddled close together, in two or three parallel rows.

And not one of them is veiled. The Druse religion, however, may probably account for that.

Some of the men—not too trustworthy, to judge by looks—are making friends of the camp attendants: quite a levy is being held about the kitchen tent. Women too: these have brought provender into camp. The dragoman informs you that he has engaged a couple of these men to watch the camp during the coming night. Well: on the principle of “set a thief,” the scheme may work.

Mejdel, it appears, is famous for the manufacture of steel blades: in this respect it is the successor of Damascus, whose right hand has lost its cunning. One of the fellows about has brought for inspection a few pocket-knives manufactured by himself. It is a concession to Western ideas to speak of pocket-knives here, for the people have no pockets: there is room for a good deal of promiscuous storing in the portion of a garment above the waist-string; but such an article as a knife is suspended from the girdle; and these knives are each provided with an iron loop for this purpose.

Whether this be the only kind of girdle-knife they make, or whether it so happens that other kinds are not in stock at present, at all events the knives produced are as like as brothers. The blade is somewhat hooked, and the handle, which is of brass and ornamented after a fashion, is made with a corresponding bend. The loop is attached at the hinge, so that when suspended the knife hangs with the point downward, like a razor, for it has no spring.

There is a good demand in the camp for these articles: more, in fact, are wanted than the vendor can supply. The rest are to be forthcoming in the morning.

Mejdel-esh-Shems, or Mejdel of the sun, is a remarkable village, or rather town, for it is a large place. It lies on a long ridge which skirts the base of the supreme slopes of Hermon. This ridge, which resembles a table-

knife laid edge upwards, starting from the mountain-side, runs east, and soon merges in other spurs, the heights behind receding with a slightly north-east bend. The houses are built along the whole face of the ridge, as also on its top; and are therefore beautifully placed for the reception of the sunshine, which up here is very much wanted. The lie may account for the name. Whether there are any houses on the northern-side of the ridge does not appear: if so, they must have a cold time. The glen however, separating the village from the heights behind, is a safeguard against avalanches, or the fall of rocks. Taking it all in all, Mejdal is a wonderful place. It has a clean pink appearance, as if newly built; though, at the same time, it suggests a great quarry in process of being worked. Its eastern extremity is somewhat hidden behind a shorter ridge whose roots extend to the path on whose border you are encamped.

This is a delightfully clean meadow: the grass is so short, and the soil so compact, that the floor-rugs are hardly wanted: floor-rugs are hardly wanted: you might lie on the ground here, only it would be a rather cold couch.

Dinner this evening is enlivened in a way it has not hitherto been: spectators you have had none, except flies and possibly frogs; but Mejdal introduces the innovation of a turn-out of the townspeople to behold you eat. It took some little time before it dawned upon the company that, outside, in the dark and the wind, stood a group of women peering into the tent. The door curtain has been tucked aside as usual to allow the waiter to get the more easily in and out; and so the feminine group have full scope for the exercise of that rare function curiosity. And they might have gazed long enough, their presence never being suspected, had they been able to restrain their expression of wonder. No doubt the solitary lady of your party came in for a double share of inspection:

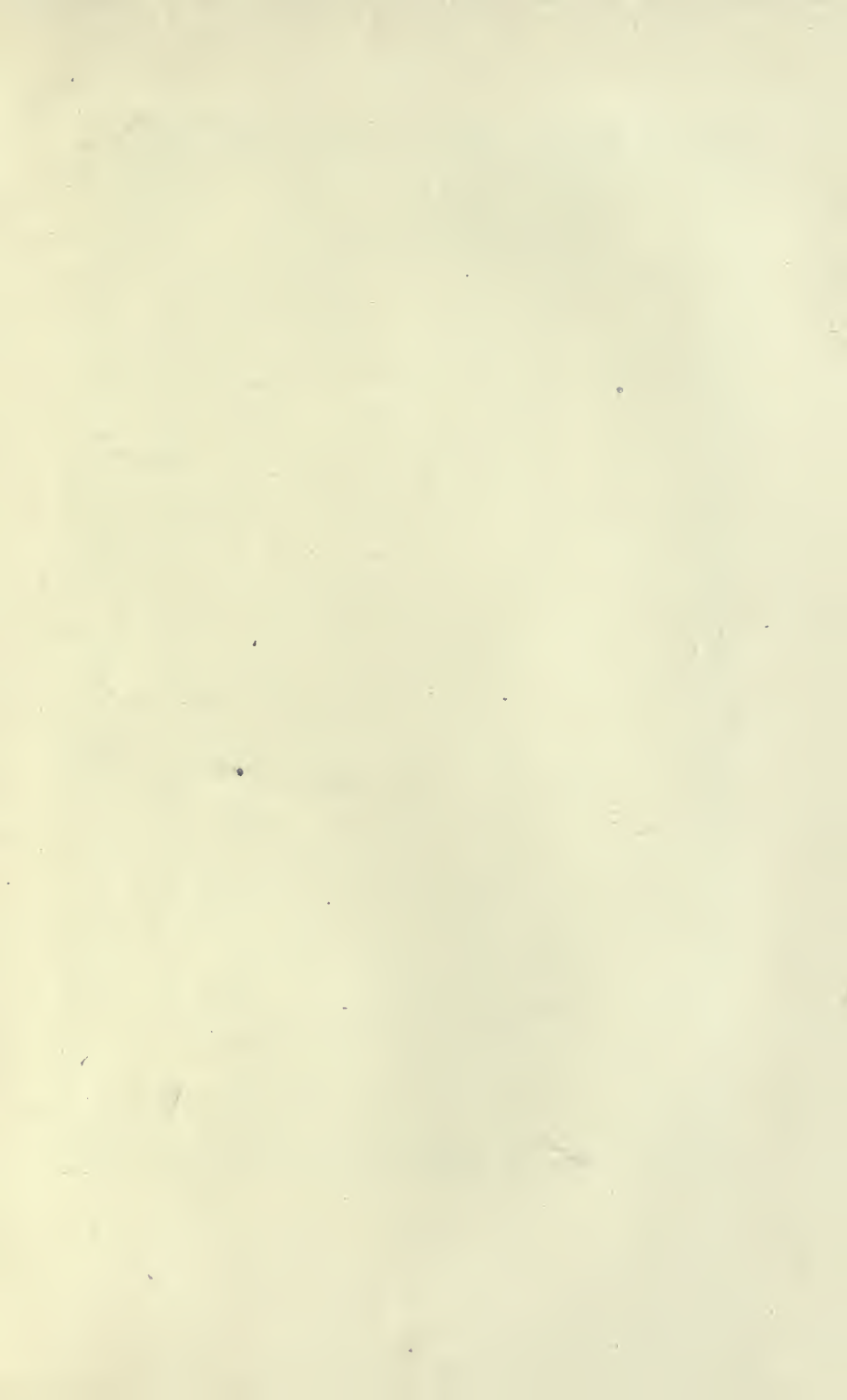
her attire, the mode in which her hair is dressed, and not least her easy demeanour among the men, over whom she presides as a sort of queen: all these things, no doubt, have been noted and treasured up in their hearts, to be food for rumination many days hence. But whether, like children, having satisfied their curiosity they give way to the impulse of fun-making and push each other towards the tent, or through eagerness to have a closer inspection, at any rate they have advanced till now their faces are grouped together at the very entrance, like figures in a photograph. And now the curiosity passes to the other side: it is your turn to inspect.

It need scarcely be added, you recognize some of the faces: they are those of privileged persons, the wives or daughters of the watchers and their friends, and the same individuals who brought supplies to the cook. But now you have a more leisurely look at them, for the lady invites them to enter. With reluctance, and not without a little preliminary pushing of each other to the front, some of them do come in. And your own curiosity next gets satisfied. You had been struck with the peculiar appearance of the eyes of the one or two who brought the fowls: it seemed as if they had uncommonly dense eyelashes, which gave an unnatural but not unpleasing look to the face: there was a blueness surrounding either eye like a nimbus, which excited your wonder. Now you perceive that every one of these ladies dyes her eyelids. What the peculiar pigment is you do not ascertain: all you know about it is that it is largely if not universally used by the women here, that it produces a blue whose effect is to immensely enhance the whole expression of the face, and which therefore might be used with advantage if put on sparingly; but as for these ladies before you, they have overdone it: it is too patent: they might almost have been fighting and giving each other black eyes. That the tricks of the stage trade, as practised in

the West, should be not only known but openly and universally practised in a place like this, is certainly surprising. It is not new, however; for in Ezekiel it is written, "Lo, they came; for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thine eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments."

These Druses are the mortal foes of the Maronites. The latter, who are Christians, are numerous in the Lebanon district; but since the fierce attempt in 1860 on the part of their Druse neighbours to massacre them, they have moved towards the coast.

Talk of wind-swept Ilium: these upper glens of Hermon are a match for the plain of Troy, or any other plain, in the matter of gusty winds, and cold winds too. To-night you feel not only the blowing of a constant gale under your bed, a torrent of cold air as if it were a river, sweeping along swift and strong, but somewhere in the upper regions of the tent the blowers have discovered, not a rent but some sort of opening, through which they have introduced the pipe of their cyclopean bellows, and pointing it at your ear, are working away as though paid by the piece. Turn as you please, you cannot escape it: the only thing to be done is to tuck the clothes over your head, and go to sleep in spite of it.





MOUNT HERMON.

CHAPTER XX.

HERMON.

CONTRARY to Sir Ralph the Rover's experience, you find that the wind, boisterous all night, in the morning has died away. You have little time, however, to think of the wind or the weather: such ominous sounds assail your startled ears that you are fain to rub your eyes, and reflect as to whether you are really awake. Your tent-mate meantime, who has seized and shaken you, soon brings home the sober fact that it is no dream, and that, be the matter what it may, some unpleasantness is going on outside: the loud voices of men, accompanied with thuds as from a heavy stick, proclaim that either the watchers have quarrelled among themselves, or with your men, or are being attacked from without. Your neighbour ventures to look out, although it is barely daylight: he wishes, naturally enough, to satisfy himself as to whether or not the camp has been set upon by robbers: indeed that seems the most probable interpretation that can be put on the mysterious affair. Still the yelling goes on: they are fighting, without a doubt.

The dragoman, ever to the front in any emergency, is soon on the spot; and peace once more reigns among the tents. The occasion of the disturbance has been simple enough: a cutler had bethought him of stealing a march upon his brother craftsman who was trysted to supply some more knives. Getting up betimes, he came

down to the camp, goods in hand, and was waiting for his money; when lo! the real man appeared on the scene. The rest can be imagined.

Finding it hardly time to rise, and a sharp morning, your comrade, whose heels have got somewhat cooled, bethinks him of returning to bed for a little, by way of getting comfortably thawed. Can you ever forget the piercing shriek that rent your ears, as you saw him, through the dim grey of the morning, spring right to the tent roof, and make straight for the door? "Serpent," did he say? Well, it might be: you have no information as to whether such creatures are denizens of these parts, although you have heard of adders on the mountains at home. And as for getting into a bed, that too you feel is not improbable, calling to mind, as you now do, the blind beggar's comforting words to his servant boy Lazarillo di Tormes, as to serpents being cold creatures, and liking nothing better than to get crawling into a warm bed. But serpent or no serpent, the only course open to you obviously, and to be taken unhesitatingly, is not to attempt flight, but simply to stay where you are, and repeating the process you were driven to by the bellows' pipe last night, tuck the clothes over your head, and remain quite passive: the matter will be settled by others: if it is a serpent, or any creature deserving or requiring to be assailed, the attendants will be able to cope with it. Nay, you would trust the dragoman single-handed—but, you must own, a new difficulty presents itself with the utterance of that word dragoman: a dragon, if it resemble the pictures you have seen, be it even the griffin from Temple Bar, might easily overturn your little bed, and do it perhaps by sheer accident; when, tumbled out of the clothes, prostrate, and unarmed—for your revolver is in the bag, that potent six-shooter, which you have never yet had the courage to fire, afraid that it burst—where would you be?

Another thought occurs—thoughts are crowding in, and with the swiftness of a dream you pass from one conjecture to another, almost realizing the drowning man's experience of having all his past, in a very minute but distinct panorama, jerked into shape before his eye as in the turn of a kaleidoscope: only, you are worse beset than he; for while the sense of immediate destruction is the one idea that fills his mind, to you there is the additional element of doubt as to whether you are to be destroyed, and especially as to the nature of the creature that is to be your destroyer. And the fresh thought is this, What if it should be your old friend the chameleon whose acquaintance you made at Ain Mellāha by the Waters of Merom! The creature seemed pleased with the attention it received: it remained perfectly quiet while you managed to induce it to transfer itself from the green stalk of the gigantic weed to your stick; and if it had possessed the power of speech, no doubt it would have expressed its thankfulness when, in order to protect it from the wicked attentions of the two or three small boys that were hovering about, you stealthily conveyed it up the hill-side, and deposited it behind some monster boulders. It would indeed be strange, but who may presume to set a limit to the marvellous? The creature must have had a rough time, if it has been following up the camp, and only now overtaken it: especially trying would that sinky region in the north-west corner of the plain be, where your horse's nose kept digging into the mud in the well-nigh hopeless effort to wade through. And, to think of the poor thing hirpling along in search of the bridge of El Ghajār to get across the Hasbāny, and, having found it, quickening its pace to make up for lost time; and then taking to the hill, and following on by Banias, and up here, and lying outside Mejdal until under cloud of night it might venture to enter the camp. In all likelihood it has been ensconced in your tent for

some hours, and only bethought itself of getting into the warm bed when it saw the red blanket turned down. What a misfortune should the camp attendants rush at it and kill it!

They speak of a bad quarter of an hour: how long it may have been before the welcome sounds of the dragoman's familiar voice managed to reach you in your mummy condition you will never know: it seemed no doubt much longer than it actually was. But there came an opening up, at last, like the breaking of the Arabs into the tombs of Egypt, and the bringing of the long-dead Pharaohs to light.

With breathless anxiety you await the explanation. It appears that the dragoman fearlessly proceeded to enter the tent, and if need be grip the venomous beast by the throat; but your tent-mate, alarmed at the possible prospect of not only being left to the tender mercies of a voracious monster, but, the dragoman being dead, cast headless and therefore helpless, like a hive of bees deprived of their queen, upon an inhospitable land, manifested the courage of his convictions, and seizing Joseph round the waist, made him a prisoner.

To make a long story short: after much clamouring and hesitation, with stealthy glances now to this side, now to that, the bed was reached; and true enough there lay the deadly thing, whose cold touch had made the poor man spring to the tent roof: it was his revolver. In the excitement he had dragged it out, held it ready for action, and, after the disturbance was explained, dropped it, without thinking, upon the bed. It will not be wise or prudent to refer to this episode in his presence: happily the journey is drawing to a close: by to-morrow evening you expect to be riding into Damascus.

The breakfast table is uncommonly quiet this morning: no one seems to have anything to say: each is intent upon the function of feeding, all extra-personal matters being

tacitly voted uninteresting and unworthy of remark : the truth is, everybody is afraid to venture upon utterance lest the impulse to laugh, which is hard enough to keep down, get the mastery. Thankful are you when the time comes that you can decently withdraw.

The journey from Mejdél is at first down into a glen. Ascending at the farther end, you come nearer to the region of the snow than at any point hitherto : it appears as if you were leaving the living world behind : human habitations there are none : you look in vain for another village to the south. That was a curious one you saw among the mountain clefts not far south of Mejdél : it was as though built on the deck of an ocean steamer—that is, if you could fancy a steamer whose hull rose several hundreds of feet above the water. The point on which the village stood ran right out like a ship's prow. Unless fenced, which it did not appear to be, the natives would be apt to walk over it in the dark, and be precipitated into the abyss.

You soon emerge from the glens, on to a great table-land. By this time the rain has begun to fall, a new and unpleasant experience, for this is the first wet day you have had. The table-land is partly cultivated, and may in a fine summer's day be a bright enough district ; but in a pouring rain like this it gives one the impression of its being a back-lying place ; for it rises towards the south, as though it were a separate mountain in front of Hermon, or a spur of Hermon—which it is—and not a table-land at all. The rocks too are of a dark colour, which further detracts from the appearance of the place : altogether you have a feeling of traversing a very outlandish district. As you traverse it, however, south-eastward, you begin to be aware of a vast expanse of low country opening out in front of you towards the horizon. In this expanse a mountain range stands out prominent : it is the range that separates the great plain in which Damascus lies

from the district called the Haurān, which name includes the territory to the east of the Waters of Merom and the Lake of Tiberias. In this range one mountain is egregious, that is to say it stands out from among the rest: it is called the Black Mountain. At this point you begin to entertain the hope of by and by getting out of the mountain region. Hitherto, even while traversing this table-land, you have felt hemmed in by the sight of more and more hills between you and the low grounds, and have skirted desolate lakes, and well-nigh despaired of ever reaching the level again. And the rain is turning into sleet. And in spite of your long ulster, the wet has sought its way into your shoes, till they are full of water: you take one foot after the other out of the stirrup, and holding it up, pour forth a stream by the heel. And the wind comes in gusts making your umbrella crack, and sending your hat over your eyes. This is far from luxurious.

In the midst of it all, however, you find time to wonder at the white donkey. There it goes, leading the van, unguided, unattended. See how it sets the side of its head to the storm, and pushes on, instinctively tracking the poorly marked path, now avoiding a boulder, now climbing a flat rock, and finding its own way down on the farther side. First and last, you have been more deeply impressed by the voluntary doings of that donkey than you can tell.

And the boys: the bigger of the two is already a wretched spectacle. Every one of you has to endure, as best he can, the beating of the sleet upon the face; and no doubt the twisting of features that is going on is grotesque enough; but that poor boy manifestly excels. The tempest so smites his ear that you can hear the pelting of the great water-drops that mingle with the snowflakes; and from the tip of his nose there trickles a constant stream. And his blue cotton garment, glazed with the wet, is clinging to his skin, *à la* Charlotte

Corday going to the guillotine. And his broad shoes refuse to lift at the heels. Truly he is the sport of the elements. Over-garment he has none : change of raiment he has none.

A fews hours of this, and it becomes apparent that there can be no halting for lunch to day : for one thing, it would be out of the question to think of squatting in the wet, even upon stones ; and then, once dismounted, the saddles would get drenched. No : hunger may be bad enough, but you prefer to plod on, pleased in a measure to think that by and by your backs will be turned to the tempest, and you will be able to simply hide your ears in your coat-collar, and endure in silence.

The descent from the table-land to the low ground is accomplished not without difficulty : riding down these steep parts would be hard enough minus the additional disturbing element of stormy weather, and the general feeling of discomfort and awkwardness proceeding from an incubus of wet garments above and soaking shoes and stockings beneath. But once down on the flat, you turn northwards. The storm now blows upon your back. A couple of hours and you reach a small river—a broadish but shallow and pebbly-bottomed stream : this is the Pharpar of old. It flows out of a gorge in the east side of the great lone table-land you have just traversed. Looking up that gorge you see some few habitations and a mill or two. Here, as in the case of the Jordan at Dan, the river is set to do work before it is very old. In the absence of a bridge you have to ford the stream. At the most critical moment, when about the middle, you are so seized and shaken by the tempest that your good substantial umbrella, built to order and intended for rough usage, not only gives way but is torn to ribbons, and even the framework is shattered. You quietly grasp it as you would a stick, resolved to retain the wreck as a memento of the day's experience, and of the river Pharpar.

Two more hours, you are informed, and you will have reached the limit of this day's march. Tired and sick of the whole thing, this information is not calculated to revive your drooping spirits. However, the way is comparatively easy: the country, which presents a red and clayey appearance, and does not seem to be so generally cultivated as one would have expected, is undulating, but the mountains have been passed: you are done with all that. Perhaps were you to probe your heart to the bottom, you might find something not unlike regret to think you have parted with the Sheik Mountain: Hermon you shall ever remember with awe. But it is still at hand: a little way to the left it lifts its great white peaks aloft; and its mighty mass—for the gigantic pile measured from Mejdal extends some twenty miles towards the north—monopolizes the region lying to the west.

As you advance, encountering now and then a small plantation of silver poplars which serve to emphasize the nakedness of the land, for they are so thin and so straight, your view of the east side of Hermon widens: the vast mountain-side, curved north-eastward, and therefore presenting the appearance of a segment of a circle, is one sheet of snow: to-day's storm has given it a coating right down to the plain. And the snowflakes are falling thick about you: it is to all intents a winter's day.

Impatient to get under cover of some sort, you push on across the plain, following a north-easterly direction; and well on in the afternoon you ride across a stubble field, and dismount at the door of the khan which lies at the south-east corner of the village of Kafr Hauwar.

This khan is a new building, a square walled enclosure of considerable extent. The gateway is in the east-side. On either hand, on entering, one finds a small room. The interior consists of an open quadrangle, lined with stables and store-rooms. The place is looked after by a solitary old man. His domicile is the small room on the right as

you pass under the gateway. And this is your rest for the present.

Mounting the two steps that lead to this room, and casting a glance over the interior, you are delighted to see a fire. It is but a poor affair, however, a heap of red embers, not in a fireplace but on the clay floor in a corner. Seizing a piece of stick which does duty as a poker, and squatting on the floor, you proceed to stir up the dormant embers. It is like poking in liquid fire, so fine are the ashes. But the heat sent forth is exceedingly feeble: "better than nothing at all" is all you can say for it. Soon your shoes and socks are off, and deposited on the hearth. They will never dry here, unless more fuel is forthcoming, which seems hopeless. If they could give you an axe, and let you attack that tree-trunk which lies inside the gate in the gateway, and on which some of the party are at present seated partaking of food, you might make a substantial blaze. But nothing whatever is to be had except shelter, which indeed you are most thankful for: none of the numerous loafers congregated to stare seems able to be of the smallest use in procuring anything.

This room contains no furniture but a bed. The bed is of about the same dimensions as your little camp-beds. How it is constructed, you do not plainly see: most probably on inspection it would be found to be a very rough and ready erection. It stands just inside the door, on the right; and being thus near the light—for there is no window in the place—one of the party is making use of it for a table. Kneeling on the floor, and working away with knife and fork upon a leg of fowl, he seems quite happy: the faded, originally red, bed-cover or blanket serves for table-cloth, whereon he lays his piece of bread. For your part, you eat where you sit, keeping close to the embers. And when the meal is finished, you pull on your wet things, and get to your feet.

The dragoman now submits a proposal: the tents, he

maintains, never would stand in a storm like this : in fact it would be impossible to erect them, even could a piece of ground be found dry enough to furnish anything like a floor : he therefore proposes that you sanction the hiring of a couple of empty rooms in a house in the village. At first this scheme does not meet with general approval : some appear to have a dread of native houses, having heard that these are universally swarming with living things. On being reassured, however, and taking into account the continuance of the wind and sleet, and the likelihood of the storm lasting till probably the morning, all agree to move into the village. And an excellent arrangement it proves. For the rooms are quite empty and swept ; and your own beds are erected as in the tents.

The house is right in the village. To reach it you pass in front of the khan, turn to the left and skirt its north or side wall, go forward some fifty paces, skirt the walls of some broken-down houses, turn to the right into a short narrow lane, at the end of which is a little square court : this is your destination.

The whole village seems to consist of one-storey houses. These are built of bullet-like stones, with a liberal admixture of clay. The roofs are all flat, of clay resting upon closely packed smallish branches, which again rest cross-wise upon rafters.

Interest naturally centres, for you, upon the room you are to occupy. It is by no means a small apartment ; nor is it low in the ceiling—if indeed one may speak of ceiling where the black rafters are exposed to view, and above them the closely-pressed layers of equally black branches that go to form the lath, so to speak, of the plaster that faces the sky. Window it has none. But it boasts a fireplace in one corner—on the left as you enter. This is the spot that possesses the chief charm : you now hope to get your shoes dried : as for the socks, they can wait ; but this is your only pair of strong shoes. There is actually

a chimney—surely a wonderful piece of extravagance—and could the fire but be kept up, all would be well. But these heads of Indian corn, which seem to be the sole article of fuel in the house, so speedily burn away: it is a sudden and brilliant blaze, and though not productive of great heat, would do, if it would last: but scarcely have you set it agoing, when lo, like a pyrotechnic display, it is gone. Ashamed to be asking so often for fresh supplies, you bethink you of getting the ear of the old woman the mistress of the house—not to burn it, but to whisper into it a coaxing word or two: you have long believed in the efficacy of a smooth word, which, as the sacred page has it, turneth away wrath. The result is that in a few minutes the fireplace is replenished, and this time with some wood, which gives the promise of not only dry shoes, and dry garments, but the kindly cheer so much needed in your present chilled condition: you are positively full of happiness.

And then here are the beds. The place, no doubt, recalls the hospital at home, where the soldiers' little beds—not unlike these—are ranged along the wall; only, in the hospital they possess a table or two, and perhaps more than one easy-chair, while here such luxuries are out of your calculations, although the tent camp-stools are not a bad substitute.

The three single men and yourself have been turned in here: the other room, a much smaller one, is to be occupied by the doctor and his wife.

Being naturally of an inquisitive turn of mind, you set about inspecting the room. The roof you have already noticed; the clay floor also; but the walls are as yet more or less of a mystery. On examination these prove to be covered with a coating of clay, or cement of a coarse kind; and an attempt at ornamentation has been made, for a narrow line of clay frilling, apparently meant for the top of a dado but much too high for that, runs round the

apartment. There are two cement bins on the back wall. These are meant for the custody of corn, which can be drawn out by a small opening, just at the floor, somewhat like the hole under a furnace, by which the ashes are withdrawn. But, most curious of all, here is an aperture in the wall, a small peep-hole, by which you can look into the adjoining apartment. The peep-hole is right over your bed. No glass, of course : it is simply an open hole. And in that adjoining apartment what meets your eye reminds you of a passage in the Bible, which has never appeared so literally true as now. When the woman whom Saul went to consult at Endor said there was a calf in the house, she spoke words which, if applied to this house, would be literally correct : there stands the calf, within a couple of paces of you ; and it evidently has very comfortable quarters. There is no great blaze of light, it is true, but light here means cold : the larger the hole by which light is admitted, the more vent for the wind to enter by : the calf enjoys the same light as you do : if the door is open, a good deal ; if shut, what can enter by the gaps above and underneath, and more or less along the sides.

As for the disposal of your wardrobe, what of it is perfectly dry you deposit on the bed, in the hope that it may prove a source of comfort during the coming night ; the rest you manage to hang up in a rather ingenious fashion, by pushing a stick, over the upper edge of a rafter, into the roof, and suspending the garments on the end of this. By this expedient you avoid all possibility of creeping things getting at your clothes, unless, indeed, some exceptionally enterprising individuals essay the stick, and, coming down in that way, pour contempt upon your contrivance. The worst feature of it, however, is its awful suggestiveness : the likelihood is that in the early morning when the light begins to penetrate, one or other of your comrades may awake out of a troubled dream, and, his

confused eye catching an indistinct glimpse of your ulster suspended by the neck, may think it his duty to lose no time in cutting you down.

The door cannot be locked from within. This appears at first sight a drawback, and in your particular case is a drawback, for you would feel, through force of habit, more secure could you bolt the door before going to sleep; but for the natives of these parts it is enough that a door be locked when the inmate is no longer within: within, he is ready to defend himself, and to come out and defend the property in cows, calves, and otherwise, that is locked into the adjoining chambers. There may be about the idea just a little that is not quite reassuring, but no doubt it is better, if the thief is to attack the premises at all, he should be tempted by the unlocked door to begin at headquarters.

For curiosity you request the key to be fetched. It proves a curiosity indeed. Fancy a tooth-brush big enough to be used by a giant. Let its body be made not of ivory, but of wood; and let it have instead of bristles—or better, badger's hair—wires of the thickness of a darning-needle, and only some half-dozen of these. Such is the key. Holding it wires up, you insert it into a hole in the door for the purpose, push upwards, and then draw the wooden bolt back. The explanation is easy: when the bolt is pushed out—that is, towards the hole in the wall—certain wires that are imbedded in the door drop into corresponding little holes in the bolt: the only way to free the bolt, so as to let it be drawn back again, is by pushing up each of those wires simultaneously. Suppose that in this case the wires that have dropped down into the bolt are five in number, and arranged after the manner of five spots on a card: the only key that will answer will be one having five wires so arranged, and at the same distances from each other moreover, as those in the bolt. Possessed of such a key, you have but to insert it, and

pushing the wires upwards, draw back the bolt. The man who invented this was not lacking in ingenuity.

The storm continues, but the little enclosure into which your door opens is tolerably sheltered, and besides, a bit of projecting roof enables you to venture out in spite of the rain. This projecting roof is intended to cover the space where the inmates sit and work, whether with the needle or among the dishes, for here, too, is a stone trough containing water. The court altogether is about three paces square. The side opposite to your door, the east side, is a blank wall—the wall of an adjoining house; in that on the left hand, or north, and just in the near corner, is the door leading to the private apartments of the lady of the house, as also to the calf's quarters; in that on the right, is the door of the room occupied by the doctor and his wife; the exit into the street being, as already stated, by a narrow lane from the south-east corner of the court.

All three doors are open, the several inmates sitting looking out into the little court, and among the rest the mistress of the house herself. Her daughter, heedless of the rain except to throw a slight shawl over her head and shoulders, is going to and fro fetching water, which she pours into the trough. Barefooted, she has inserted her feet into a pair of pattens. These elevate her some five or six inches above the ground. And she walks fairly nimbly on them, the simple strap that passes over the middle of the foot being quite sufficient to keep them on, although very probably any one unaccustomed to them would find it far from sufficient. There is even a degree of gracefulness in her gait: on the whole, her motion on them suggests leisurely skating.

This young lady and her costume are worth describing. To begin at the top, she wears on her head a small thin white shawl. This covers the shoulders as well, and is drawn under the chin on one side, and thrown

over the opposite shoulder. To keep this in its place a black band surrounds the head. The ears, being thus hidden, require no decoration. But she wears a pearl on the right nostril. Her features are fairly good, of a slightly Jewish type; and as for her complexion it can be compared to nothing but a thoroughly ripe peach. Her gown is of blue linsey-woolsey, embroidered with white. Over this is a red apron of the same material, decorated with yellow. Round the waist is a red sash, which hangs down behind. And lastly, trousers of a red and white stripe, drawn tight at the ankles. The feet are bare. The gown is open down the front, but the apron covers this to about the knee.

As for the relationship of the two women, there is no mistaking the fact that they are mother and daughter: the features are very similar, and the mother possesses the same rich hues of complexion as the daughter, only somewhat darkened; and both are tallish and slight. They appear to be well-to-do people: judging by the house, one would say they were the principal family in the village.

While the rain pours, there is little else to do than to sit in the doorway and entertain oneself, watching what goes on in the little court. One of the party possesses still a few cigarettes—a very few—and they are precious in his eyes, for they must be made to last until Damascus is reached. He has lit one of them, time, place, and circumstance seeming to warrant this reckless indulgence. And the damsel is greatly interested in the smoker's movements: in the matter of cigarettes, she is as innocent of the ways of her town-bred sisters as a village maiden of the West is of London life. She may not be able to smoke, but she would like to try the experiment. He hands to her the newly-lighted cigarette. She takes a draw or two, puffing the smoke rather awkwardly, and speedily breaking into a cough, in the midst of which she drops the precious thing. It falls into a pool, and is gone.

Another has to be lighted, of course. With this she gets on better, taking care not to choke by inhaling the smoke. But to every one's astonishment, after a few puffs she restores it to its owner. He knowing all eyes are upon him, receives it rather sheepishly, and would fain have her stick to it: no doubt he would simply toss it away, were the lady to turn her back; but with those great black eyes in full blaze upon him, how can he possibly get over the imperative necessity of resuming his smoke? To throw the thing down would be a manifest insult: to simply make an untimely end of smoking, nothing less: there is only one course open, and that is to gulp the dose, and puff away.

Whether on second thoughts, or out of an original premeditation, it is impossible to determine, but after he has puffed for a few moments she holds out her hand, as much as to say she would like to try it again. Things are beginning to look serious. Fortunately in the midst of this second experiment, a young man of the village enters the court. To him the lady, without hesitation, presents the cigarette. As for its restoration to the rightful owner after this, there can be no question: nothing will induce him to use it further. But the plot deepens: the lady would have another cigarette lit. This will be the third; and your friend begins to appreciate the reflection made by the poor woman who, when feasting her clergyman on scones and tea much against his will, remarked, "Take another, and that'll make four." He had no intention of doing for whole three out of the slender stock of four this afternoon. However, it has to be done. And this time, after trial by Miss, it passes to the mother. Truly there is a generosity and unselfishness about these people which is overwhelmingly admirable. Regarding with mournful eye the last survivor of the lot, he summons, not without a desperate effort, the necessary resolution, and shuts up the box.

It so happens that the same gentleman wears a heavy gold ring. This is the next object that attracts the damsel's searching eye. She would try it on her finger. Much too large, she nevertheless thinks she could manage to get on with it. Here now is the pleasant prospect of losing his ring. It might be said, too, that he had presented it, thus involving himself in an engagement to marry this unsophisticated Syrian maiden. The dragoon chances to come on the scene, and taking in the situation, as he always does, at a glance, would like to see the ring. After a feigned inspection, he hands it to its owner, and manages to change the subject.

It now begins to be fine, and there is a general move to the outside. The damsel summons you to the house-top. This you are to reach by means of a rude ladder, whose steps are a good yard apart, and these of doubtful stability. However, you do succeed in gaining the upper region. Here is a stone roller, weighing probably half a hundred-weight. It is mounted in unwrought wood, and has a cross-handle by which it is pulled or pushed. The stone shows more signs of skilled labour than the wood : people who have been making millstones for the last few thousand years may be trusted to produce a fairly presentable roller. Your natural wonder at seeing a garden-roller up here is speedily dispelled : the damsel, grasping the handle, begins to roll the house-top. So apt is she at the work, that you conclude she has been used to it from her early days. You volunteer to try your hand at it. But it is not so easy as it looks : the wet clay is slippery ; and your abundant strength hardly gets fair play : the damsel can do the work better than you.

But a very little suffices : it is only the few cracks, which the sun has made during the drought, that have to be re-cemented : a touch or two of the roller does this.

And now you survey the village roofs. On every house there is a roller : it is the one essential article on the

house-top. As for the lanes, they are so narrow as to be imperceptible, all but those very near. The whole place is house-top. And as your eye wanders westward to the vast white slopes of Hermon, which seem quite near, you wonder this nest of one-storey hovels is not in winter overspread with the drifting snow from the mountain, and the people rendered hibernators of necessity: lanes like these, once filled up, would be incapable of clearance—until the thaw came and turned each house into a pond. Hermon is a glorious pile; but the sheik of the mountains is viewed most comfortably from afar.

That village on the hill-side, a mile or so to the north-east, has a peculiar fascination for you, second only to Hermon itself: again and again you find yourself turning to look at it—to look, and wonder, and speculate. It is called Bētīma, but that is no matter: it is the aspect of the place that sets you athinking. Built apparently of wood, which with sun and rain has got bleached a greyish blue, it reminds you of a collection of rickety sheds, decidedly off the plumb, and only holding together because the nails are rusty. The houses cling to the long hill-side; and the many gangways give to the place the character of a permanent grand-stand, from which the inhabitants, summer and winter, morning and evening, may lift their admiring eyes to mighty Hermon.

Your cook, as usual, has plenty of company: the entire population must have been here to-day to see the stove at work. It stands in an outhouse, on the right hand in the little lane as you go forth from your quarters. But indeed all the houses here might be designated outhouses: the village could be likened to nothing more appropriately than to the tumbledown barns and hen-houses about the steading of a crofter's holding of the old stamp.

But Kafr Hauwar is a notable village, for all that, and boasts the distinction of possessing a tomb which many a city might well envy it of—nothing less than that of

Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter before the Lord. There can be no doubt that about here is the land of Nimrod : in the Book of Micah it is said that seven shepherds and eight principal men—whatever that may mean—should waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof. The land here is the entrance of or to Assyria : just as the Bible speaks of the Hasbāny valley as “the entering in of Hamath,” meaning that Hamath begins from there, so in this instance with regard to Assyria : it began from the land of Nimrod. Nimrod was a mighty hunter, and no doubt these slopes of Hermon were his hunting-ground ; while the well-watered plain of Damascus would be tilled by his subjects ; and beyond that plain, on the road to Assyria, lies the desert—Assyrian, in Bible days, if any man’s land.

The tomb is not much to look at, all of it that is visible being but a long cairn of stones in a field. But they tell you, and apparently with truth, that under the surface at no great depth is an extensive building of great antiquity. You may have your doubts as to whether the veteran hunter really reposes here, or whether the discovery of the underground structure may not have suggested the idea of Nimrod. In either case, there is the undercurrent of legendary belief that it was about here that he lived and hunted. The places you have passed through hitherto on this journey are some of them old enough : Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt ; and Moses no doubt knew the Pyramids of Gizeh ; but here you get farther back still : this man was the great-grandson of Noah.

This evening dinner is to be served in the doctor’s room. It is much the smaller of the two ; but, all things considered, it has claims to aspire to the rank of dining-room, bedroom though it is. The two little beds are pushed as far out of the way as possible ; and when the

candles are lit the place looks not so badly after all. It has been re-heated several times during the afternoon, and some traces of the last heating still linger in the atmosphere; for there is neither fireplace nor chimney, and consequently heating it up was like smoking bees. The smoke, however, is not so disagreeable as it might have been: the successive fires have been a tray of Indian-corn husks each time. These set up a brilliant blaze, and though short-lived when once set on fire, certainly dry the atmosphere most effectually. The dense white smoke nips the eyes, but you are willing to tolerate a reasonable amount of torture, well aware by this time how impossible it is to see these remote places without roughing it a little.

CHAPTER XXI.

DRAWING NIGH UNTO DAMASCUS.

A GAIN the morning breaks lovely, and you rise refreshed. Nothing unpleasant has occurred overnight: the opening under the door would have admitted a dog, but no dog came; or if it did, it entered quietly, and after a snuff round took its departure equally quietly.

Breakfast is in the doctor's room. In your exuberance at the fineness of the morning you go bouncing up the two steps that lead to that apartment, and unmindful of the lowness of the doorways in these parts, knock your helmet over your eyes. It is cheering to hear a laugh. And here comes the maiden bearing some scones she has just baked. They are not extremely palatable, being rather hot and limp, and probably deficient in salt. But you take the kindly proffered gift with a good grace. In truth it is also a matter of interest to taste the native bread.

And when the horses are announced as in readiness, and you take farewell of the good old lady and her picturesque daughter, a faint trace of sadness is probably discernible in the looks and accents of you all, knowing, as you well do, that you will see each other's faces no more.

Riding eastward down by the north side of the khan, you descend a glen, at the foot of which you ford a bustling stream—swollen no doubt with yesterday's storm—and climb the rising ground beyond. These are not hills exactly: the country would be better described as un-

dulating: you soon discover that your path to-day—at least the early part of it—is somewhat of the nature of a switchback railway: over a broad rounded height, down into a wide curving hollow, over another broad height, and so on for miles: you are on the intermediate territory between the mountains proper and the plain.

After turning your back on the clumps of delicate silver poplars about Kafr Hauwar, there is little in the way of vegetation to be seen: these lands are red and bare, and though cultivated in parts, and in the season green or yellow as the case may be, at present are seemingly disowned. The higher portions are above the reach of the streams, and get but little sustenance, and the flat and lower portions are a mud puddle.

Great is the annoyance caused to-day by these mud puddles: no sooner have you got with difficulty through one, the horse's girth almost scraping the soft clay, than lo, another. It becomes a matter of progressing just as one is able: you are riding far apart, some being half a mile ahead of others. Nor is it any use attempting to circumvent the puddles: you may go farther to the right or left, thinking it looks more solid; but once fairly in, you find it much the same, and are thankful if it is no worse.

The path too is slippery: your tent-mate's horse has been singularly unfortunate surely, for this is the second time to-day it has thrown its rider in its frantic struggles to keep its own footing. The poor man makes a sorry figure: the back of his coat is as if painted with mud. And he will ride into Damascus thus disfigured.

You come upon a road which lies on your right. The fact is you have hardly been on a road since leaving Kafr Hauwar: you have come across-country in order to join this road here. It is of the ordinary type of caravan route, not adapted to wheeled vehicles. It looks a dreary path, unfenced, and only marked off from the bare lands on

either side by being trodden. You turn and follow it with the eye, just to see where it has come from ; but the rising ground soon cuts off the view.

This road is the one that Saul of Tarsus would come by, on his memorable journey to Damascus : it crosses the Jordan below the Waters of Merom by the bridge called the Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob, and striking diagonally across the lowlands, passes into this region without touching Hermon. It is a much shorter road than the one you have travelled ; but of course you wanted to see the Waters of Merom, the sources of the Jordan, Dan, and Banias, and to climb at least the southern slopes of Hermon.

This spot then, where you now stand, is held by tradition to be the scene of Paul's strange experience : " As he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus : and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven : and he fell upon the earth."

And here, across the path, flows a pleasant stream. It is easily forded, for its bed is pebbly. The name Barbar contains a remnant of the ancient Pharpar, although this tributary no longer reaches the real Pharpar, being exhausted in the irrigation of gardens and fields, and thus brought to an untimely end. The real Pharpar lies considerably to the south : it was in fording it that your umbrella went to pieces.

The dragoman suggests a halt here for lunch, as an excellent khan stands near by. It is indeed a handsome khan, much the finest you have seen : it might pass for a barracks. The one you encountered between the Lake of Tiberias and the Waters of Merom, up in the high lands—where they point out the cistern into which, according to one version, Joseph was lowered—was very extensive ; but this is larger still, and altogether superior. Riding in by the great gateway, you find quite a colony around the quadrangle. However, it is agreed to push on, and make

the outskirts of the forest of gardens in whose midst, far away still, lies Damascus.

You seem to be riding right for the mountain range that skirts the north side of the vast plain. It is the Anti-Lebanon, and it starts from Hermon. Away to your left, in the semicircular piece of plain that lies between you and the mountains, appears a village. How lonely it looks! It might be a convict settlement, or lepers' hospital, placed on purpose at a distance from the haunts of men. Not a tree, not a fence, to break the monotony of the land lake that stretches far around it on the south; and the bleak red mountain chain rising behind. You turn your eyes towards the east where at any rate plenty of vegetation adorns the landscape, and now there is the hope of Damascus itself by and by coming in sight.

How grateful to draw near to the pleasant plantations! Leaving the path, you ride eastward to some gardens. Here you find luxuriant grass, and hedges, and artificial fences of wood, and trees, and a brook, and men and women at work. You dismount in the plantation; and the peasants gather around to look at the foreigners. And the goats are nibbling in the paddock; and some camels are leisurely moving about, now drawing near as if to inspect the intruders, now passing on to see what they can pick up.

Lunch over, and the gaudily clad peasant women scattered to their work again, you seat yourself at the root of a tree whence you can gaze upon Hermon, now in the distance but still majestic. You wonder how it could have happened that you should have lived all these years under the erroneous impression that Hermon was not much of a mountain. Why, a mountain twenty miles in length and ten in breadth, and that rises ten thousand feet right off the plain, may well expect to have some little reputation. Mont Blanc is half as high again—that is, above the sea-level—but by the time you reach its real

slopes you have already ascended several thousand feet, and the Monarch of Mountains is therefore considerably dwarfed.

The name Hermon signifies "lofty." The Arabs call it the Sheik or White-haired Mountain, and sometimes the Snow Mountain. The snow disappears, for the most part, in summer. The Syrian bear has his haunts on those slopes. Wolves also abound. Indeed the wild beasts have the upper regions practically to themselves. The lower slopes are cultivated. A wilderness of bushes, just above the line of cultivation, affords ample cover for the various kinds of game that stock the mountain. Wild fruits are found in abundance. Almonds grow in great plenty, especially on the western slopes. The vine is largely cultivated. Other fruits also are grown. Indeed Hermon in the fruit season would be a happy hunting-ground for the wild man of the woods. At this time of year, however, he would be fain to seek the plains. The ascent of Hermon can only be made in the middle of summer: it takes a whole day to do it. Guides and tents are necessary; for you must pass the night on the top. Is this an expedition likely to have been undertaken by our Lord and the three favoured disciples!

Hermon, though often referred to in the Old Testament, is not mentioned in the New. In Deuteronomy, strange to say, it is called Sion: "from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of Arnon, even unto Mount Sion—the same is Hermon." In an earlier passage of the same book, we are told that Hermon was called by the Sidonians Sirion, and by the Amorites Senir. In First Chronicles, however, we read of Baal-hermon, and Senir, and Mount Hermon—as if these were different mountains. Probably the first two would be particular localities of Hermon; and the Sidonians and Amorites might apply the name of a portion to the whole. The Psalmist says, "The north and the south, Thou hast created them;

Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Thy name." And again, "Like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion," meaning that the clouds which brought refreshment to thirsty Judea came from Hermon. In Proverbs we have an obscure reference to this mountain: "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him": the ancients seem to have iced their beverages from Hermon. In the Song of Solomon this mountain is spoken of as overrun with lions and leopards. Remains of heathen temples are found on the summit—although one would imagine they must have been built as monuments of the daring implied in their erection, rather than for purposes of worship. But you must wake up from this reverie: here comes Zaid, saddled and ready.

Shortly after leaving these gardens, you have ridden out into the open again, towards the mountain range, and now the domes and minarets appear in the east: it is a stirring sight. But only those prominent features can be discerned as yet, for the city lies hid in the forest. And now it seems as if your wanderings were at an end. But still the country before you stretches into the distance, and when another hour has passed, you are to all appearance but little nearer your destination. Will this weary red road, parallel to the hills, and traversing a barren borderland, never come to an end? It is indeed a case of hope deferred; and the best horseman of the party is here heard to declare he would not do the journey over again, no, not for a thousand pounds. He will no doubt forget the difficulties by and by, and the whole experience will become a pleasant memory. But his words, nevertheless, come wonderfully near to expressing your own thoughts.

And now you are meeting people on the road. And the domes and minarets are glittering in the nearer east in the rays of the western sun. And a mountain peak, forward to the left, adorned with a ruined tower, seems to intend

thrusting itself between you and the city. This, however, soon takes itself off towards the north; and you leave it on your left; and surmounting a round bare height, you ride down towards a mass of buildings. On approaching these, you discover a large cemetery between you and them. The graves are very numerous; and the superincumbent mounds are made of clay, in whose composition chopped straw is a prevailing element. The houses, too, are of the same material: they look almost light green, from the admixture of straw.

This, you conclude, is Damascus at last. Not so: it is an outlying village called Susah: after you have passed through it, you are in the country again, and have still some way to go. But now the road is different from anything you have seen: it is fenced on either side, to protect the gardens. And the fence consists of large blocks of dry clay, laid on edge, and built up to a height of some six feet.

You soon discover that you are on high ground: down towards the left or east, lies a lovely plain, in whose midst flows the Băără, the Abana of old. It has just emerged from the Anti-Lebanon mountains; and the towered peak you have already noted rises on the east side of the mouth of the gorge through which the river enters on the open plain. The Băără is divided into seven streams. Here is one of them at your horse's feet. It has been split off the parent stream far up the gorge, among the mountains, and carried down the right side, in a channel cut in the rock; and now it flows along the high grounds, while its parent is in the flat, fathoms below. A similar device gives a branch to the high grounds on the north side of the plain. And, down there, flows the main body of the river, in the midst of the lower plain, making straight for Damascus. It is indeed straight: a low wall on either side gives it the appearance of a canal; and three handsome low little bridges of stone span it at intervals. The

north bank is skirted by the Beyrout road—which has followed the course of the river through the mountains—and on the south lies a green carpeted park called the Merj, whereon they tell you the Turkish cavalry do their drilling; but this evening many civilians sit by the edge of the stream smoking the pipe of peace. This meadow is about a mile long, and less than a quarter of a mile in breadth. It is backed on the south by the high ground, whose edge you are now skirting as you look down upon the scene, and which, continuing to run eastward, becomes the ridge of the city.

Following the edge of the high ground until you reach the east end of the Merj, you turn to the left or north. The road here runs straight for the river, descending, and passing between the Merj and a large many-domed building for the reception of pilgrims. At the river edge you turn east alongside the stream. On your right is the wall enclosing the grounds of the pilgrim establishment. A little way forward you pass the end of one of the bridges. Farther down the stream, a street now skirting the left bank, and on your right some *café* gardens with coloured lamps hung in all directions among the slender trees, you come to the end: here the stream rushes with fearful violence into several arched tunnels, and disappears, flowing under a great square. The hotel is a corner house, facing the river, on the left bank, just opposite the point where the waters disappear. It stands but a street-width off the roaring torrent; and not a wide street either.



DAMASCUS.

CHAPTER XXII.

DAMASCUS.

TO describe Damascus one had better start from the east gate of the city. To one standing on the high rough road that from this point encircles the walls north and south, and looking down and forward some forty paces, the grand east gate presents a rather disappointing appearance. The city wall has a neglected look ; and as for the gateway it is invisible. A little observation, however, reveals the fact that this has been at one time a very fine and spacious entrance : that wide and lofty arch, which has been more than half broken down, but whose remnants are distinctly visible in the dead wall of which they have now become a part, has led into a street that, in its day, was no mere lane. And one's eyes get still more widely opened on observing, to the left of this large arch, a smaller one, also now built up. The truth is, this has been a three-arched gateway in the days of Damascus' glory : the middle one has led into the street proper, while the two side ones have led into colonnades. And there are numerous remains of these colonnades, at intervals through the city, on the line of this street—the street called Straight.

To enter by this gate, one passes through a porch built in front of the town wall, and turns to the left, and so in through the northern small arch. Approaching it from the road outside, one passes in front of some old and broken-down buildings with arches in the ground area.

These buildings run at right angles to the wall, and form a sort of square, outside the old gate. The porch through which the path leads into the town is in the corner.

Over the entrance, and so situated that one probably misses seeing it on entering, is a minaret. It rises right above the town wall, and belongs to a dilapidated mosque immediately to the north. This minaret is a good specimen of the common type: it is simply a tall square white-washed tower, pierced with small openings succeeding each other at intervals of one storey, and is surmounted with a wooden roof supported on uprights. A simple wooden railing, breast high, forms a fence. Over this the muezzin, or caller-to-prayer, leans as he sings forth his form of words. Through the wooden roof rises a belfry-looking spire of no great length. Such is this minaret; and it is of the common type, though one occasionally sees much more elaborate ones.

Inside the walls, and standing in the street called Straight, one is not a little surprised. The roadway is narrow, unpaved, and not very even. A footpath, now on one side, now on the other, and marked off by a broken and irregular line of kerb, is not inviting: one prefers to keep to the middle of the street.

The houses are of a greyish colour, the walls consisting of, or at least being coated with, a kind of clay plaster. Two storeys is the common height, though one-storey houses occur occasionally. The Damascenes seem to love, above all else in architecture, the bay window: every house has its one or more; and not infrequently a large projection, on the front of which, again, another smaller one, a bay-window proper, is fixed. These projections are almost all formed on the same plan: a number of beams protrude from the wall at the top of the first storey. These are round, unbarked, and not very thick, being in fact young poplar trees. They are laid close together, and their ends look out upon the street, no attempt being

made to cover them. Under these, from a point about half-way up from the ground, rise several supports, of the same material and appearance. These latter extend from the wall to the outer ends of the protruding beams, at an angle, of course. A small bay-window will have only two of these, one at either end; but a large projection will have as many as half a dozen.

The ground-floor seems to be very little used: at all events, in many cases one sees only tiny holes for windows, not glazed but grated. The door, even, looks poor. But the windows in the projections are usually rather elegant. A white blind within is pulled to one side, but the passer-by cannot see who sits looking out: almost every window is furnished on the outside with a thin but effective and rather picturesque wooden grating, made of slender strips of wood crossing each other at right angles, and forming a screen.

Those who cannot boast of a bay-window have as a substitute a screened projection supported by a single pole fixed at an angle on the wall. The roof of this projection is rounded off, somewhat after the manner of the flower-frames one sees projecting from windows in the West: they are sufficient to admit of the head being put forward so as to let one have a look both ways along the street.

The roofs of the houses in Damascus are formed by, first, a close layer of the slender poplars so plentiful here, and above these a coating of clay about a foot thick. The ends of the poplars are exposed to view at the roof just as under the bay-windows. This gives to the streets a rustic appearance: one gathers the impression of being among rude peasant dwellings.

Inside the city gate, a lane—for the side streets are but lanes—strikes to the right, about parallel to the wall, and not far off it. Following this lane, one finds it slightly choky; on either side are houses of the same type as

those of the main street, only on a poorer scale ; here is a weaver's shop, where half a dozen looms are at work ; there, on the other side, is an open door leading into a court where several families dwell ; and at similar doors one sees women and children looking out. There is no lack of population here.

This is the Christian quarter. At the top, or north end, of the lane is a small building which, they say, occupies the site of Ananias' house—he to whom the Lord said, in a vision, "Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus." This building is now a small church, with a crypt. The people about are out in quite a crowd ; and each little boy is more eager than another to get a horse to hold.

In the lane next and parallel to this is a rather unsavoury part : tradition makes this the lane in which Naaman resided, and on the site of his house stands a leper hospital. It opens on to the lane, and one may walk right in unawares. In the interior is an open square court, and around it are one-storey houses of a poor description. The whole place is suggestive of a third-rate stable-yard ; and the first thing that recalls the intruder to his senses is the sight of one or more of the inmates seated about the doors. Truly this seems to indicate a degree of indifference to the danger of infection, or rather contagion, quite alarming. The sooner one beats a retreat the better. And yet, out of respect for the feelings of the poor unfortunate inmates, one would disguise alarm, and back out as quietly as possible.

The lanes in this quarter very much resemble each other : they boast of no shops : the backs of the houses seem to be to the street ; and there is a certain air of squalour, though not of poverty.

In this, the Christian quarter, there are several churches. Here is a rather busier lane than the rest : it proves to

be a thoroughfare leading from Straight Street to a gate, the first on the north side of the city—reckoning from the east. This lane may be said to form the western limit of the Christian quarter. In Straight Street, opposite to where this lane runs off from it, stands a building which the Christian population have not much reason to regard with complacency: it is a police station, or rather a sort of barracks or guard-house. It is built right out into the street, on the south side, in the most arbitrary manner: coming straight forward from the east one would run against it: it actually creates a twist in Straight Street. This obtrusive erection, striped horizontally black and white, and displaying several soldiers, gun in hand, about the door at all hours of the day: it was from this building that the orders were issued for the massacre of the Christians in 1860.

There seems to be a good deal of industry among the Christians: wandering through their quarter one comes upon many a busy loom. They are not so strictly tied to work, however, but that they can halt, and come running out to see what the traveller is after: they have observed you passing their open windows, and they know you are off the track; for there is no way out, in that direction. They would fain be of use in directing the erring footsteps; but as a rule they are content to stand passive, lining the narrow way, as you return: were it not that you had a suspicion that the lane would lead nowhither, and only followed it for the sake of seeing its end, you might look sheepish: as it is, you have gone right up to the end, opened the last door, looked into the little private court, and come away again, quite composedly.

One is not long in this quarter of the city without noticing the sign-boards of some of the consuls—if such an appellation may be properly applied to those highly ornate boards that display, in addition to the name of the consulate, the arms of the country represented. These

houses, though in back lanes, are evidently spacious, and probably if inspected would prove mansions. You are surprised, however, at the first sight, to find such people as consuls residing in lanes like these: you say to yourself, "What a forsaken sort of place to live in!" For the lanes are quiet and unfrequented about here, and not too clean.

The ground slopes down towards the north in this quarter, as indeed it does the entire length of the city: Straight Street keeps the top of the ridge, and the ground declines both north and south. Nearing the gate at the northern extremity of the Christian quarter, the main lane that runs northward descends rapidly. Glancing along the far-reaching lanes that run off this on either hand, one sees the figures of men and women moving like spectres, all is so quiet. Here come, however, a troop of school-girls, led by an elderly woman: they belong to some Christian institution close by. Then, crawling up the next opening, is seen another spectre: the all-enveloping sheet in this case looks rather well, for it is broad-striped purple and white. And another, just disappearing round a corner, is red and white. These are a pleasing variety: the all but universal black and yellow, or pure white, soon become tiresome to the eye.

Down upon the flat ground, and into the wider thoroughfare that leads immediately to the gate, one finds quite a busy throng of passers-by. The road that here leads out from the city, across the river, and right north, is the highway to Aleppo: it is the great north road. By the bridge are some Arab *cafés*, where usually a goodly number of men are to be seen partaking of coffee in very tiny cups, and smoking hired narghiles. These latter, and seats, are the chief articles required in setting up an Arab *café*: the place wants no tables, or ornamental articles of furniture: in a large bare room, with an earthen floor, those Arabs congregate in such numbers, and sit so packed

together, as to present the appearance of an audience gathered to hear a lecture.

The neighbourhood of the gate is suggestive of stabling: here the country people put up their beasts. Four donkeys are just starting to go home to the country. They are being driven by a couple of peasant women, apparently sisters. These ladies are dressed in wide blue trousers tightened at the feet, jackets of the same material edged with red, and wear white handkerchiefs on their heads. As for their faces, these are well browned with exposure to the sun, and the under jaw is abundantly dotted with blue tattooing, while to complete the picture a bit of red coral adorns the right nostril. These little women each carry a stick; and they whack and push on the donkeys, as though conscious of a long journey before them. Getting fairly started—the laden couple progressing apace, and glancing with the tail of the eye to see whether the stick is at a distance—these female muleteers prepare to mount the unladen ones. Taking a run, one of them jumps on her beast, alighting just over the tail, but adhering, astride. The other tries but fails. Whereat some men seated by the roadside raise a good-natured mocking laugh. Without a moment's hesitation, the little gipsy woman makes a rush at her male scorners, and in spite of much shouting on the part of the individual selected for chastisement, brings down the stick across his back. This accomplished, she pursues the cavalcade, and putting on speed as she overtakes her special charger, springs on his back, leap-frog fashion. And so, off they go, right merrily. As for you, they seem not to have been even aware of your presence.

The road is walled on either side: this is quite the country. The first opening to the right leads down between garden fences to some meal mills on the river. On the way down, one encounters the thread-makers at work: in all the suburban roads this work of twine-

spinning goes on: the spinners keep to the side of the road, and though the twine extends over hundreds of yards in length, no obstruction is caused. To-day there is an unusual amount of stir on this road, the reason being that this is the afternoon set apart weekly for the women's outing. Twice a week these outings take place: here, this afternoon; the other afternoon, three days hence, by the riverside beyond the great square—from the square to the Merj.

Probably the two localities, at opposite ends of the town, are selected with a view to the convenience of all parties: to-day the denizens of the east end will be here in force, supplemented by some, no doubt, from the west end; and contrariwise on the west-end day.

At all events, there are plenty of representatives of the gentler sex here to-day to warrant the inaugurators of the movement in thinking they have supplied a real want. By the riverside is a broad promenade: indeed the river is split, in order that this level piece of park may have water on both sides. And the place is teeming with people, mostly women. Many are seated on the ground: by the sides of the roads that lead to this lively spot are groups of twos and threes, squatted so closely together that you have to be careful not to tread on them as you pass through. But the great bulk are walking backward and forward, talking and laughing. The white sheet is in great force to-day, especially among the promenaders: those who have come to sit wear the striped one, as being less readily soiled. Those people seem to find enjoyment in the simple open-air. There are some *cafés* here, where innocent coffee may be had; but only the male sex patronize them. No doubt many of the women smoke the narghile, and you observe them busy at it to-day, but of course that is only among the squatted ones.

In the most crowded of the roads leading hither from the town are two musicians. They sing after a fashion,

and beat the tambourine, and leap about in a meaningless manner ; but the crowd pays little attention to them ; and evidently they dare not intrude into the meadow.

This rendezvous lies off the north-east corner of the town. Between it and the town, skirted by a branch of the river, is an extensive cemetery. It is curious to wander among these graves. They are thickly strewn—so close together lie the mud mounds that wandering among them gives one the impression of wading ; the one foot has to be lifted so high before it can be set down in front of the other. Many a notable tomb is here ; many an elaborately constructed one, too, with railings and domes, and what not. But, alas, here sits a group of women of a sorrowful heart : the promenade is not for them. They are gathered in a circle under a tent-like umbrella : they keep vigil beside the newly buried body of a friend, and will do so for some days. In the West people are not always so mindful of their dead.

Pacing the cemetery till you arrive at the portion that lies off the north-east corner of the city, you cross the stream by a bridge and follow the road to the south. This brings you once more to the exterior of the east gate. Entering as before, you stand in Straight Street. This time the quarter on the left or south side of the street is to be inspected—the Jewish quarter. It ought to be remarked, however, that in speaking of the Jewish quarter, or the Christian quarter, these expressions are not to be understood absolutely : for instance, there are mosques in the Christian quarter, to wit this one immediately inside the gate, whose minaret you have already described. And, now that you are about to penetrate the Jewish quarter, you are met on its very threshold by the seemingly incongruous presence of one or two Christian churches. These stand but a little way back from the street, and belong to the Greek Church.

This locality is the most difficult to penetrate of all

you have ever tried. Jerusalem is bad enough, especially in the dense and silent district between Stephen Street and the north wall; but there, though at times driven back by a blind alley, or well-nigh crushed between a couple of too loving corners, you could force a way, feeling that you were "getting forarder"; but here, were it not for these Christian churches, which necessarily open up the place a little, it would hardly be possible to penetrate at all: the sensation produced by the repeated repulses one meets with in attempting to follow these seeming lanes is somewhat as though one were playing "blind man's buff," and constantly coming right against a wall. The wonder is, how the people get out and in: they must have an arrangement among themselves something of the nature of that in operation on a common stair in the West; only, here it applies to a considerable area of buildings—not altitude but latitude: the outer door, instead of closing upon a number of dwellings situated the one above the other, shuts in a series of recesses, each farther remote than the one through which it is approached.

This indeed is a characteristic of the Damascus dwellings in general: already, in the Christian quarter, you have again and again come upon a wooden gate, which enclosed a whole colony. These gates are getting out of use apparently; for none of them, so far as you have seen, are in working order: they lack a hinge, and lie at an angle, or the earth has got heaped slightly in front, all showing that they are not shut nightly, as was wont. But the arrangement here is different: it is a matter of well-nigh passing through one domicile to reach another. And after attempting till you are ashamed, you are fain to leave this portion, lest the denizens take you for a fugitive seeking concealment.

Proceeding along Straight Street, westward, until the striped barracks already mentioned are reached, one finds

a lane opening at right angles, to the south. This has a genuine look: you turn into it with an air of perfect confidence, as if you had traversed it a hundred times, and knew well where you were going. Were it however to turn out a blind alley, you could never have the face to come forth again: that group of arrogant soldiers on the steps of the barracks' door would be too much to pass.

This is a thoroughfare: though at times discouraging, by reason of the twists it takes, and especially by the likeness to it of some of the short lanes that run off it, it conducts the persevering explorer to the south side of the city. And here, with an open southern exposure, the ground declining rapidly towards the wall, one passes many fine dwellings. Not that they are much to look at externally—rather the reverse—nor that the lane in front is other than the rest of the narrow, uneven, and repulsive backways, but a glance through the outer entrance reveals marvels. This outer door through which you now look into the interior is but a poor portal: it might be the entrance to a little court of hovels. But in this case it is the unassuming, or rather disguised, exterior of what within proves a surprise of elegance and luxury. Nor is this a rare instance: there are many such here. Some of these dwellings are such marvels that the dragomans and city guides regard them as among the first sights of Damascus. Great is the astonishment of the Western, who has probably remonstrated with his guide for dragging him down such vile lanes, and has certainly inwardly scoffed at the idea that anything worth looking at could possibly be located in the midst of such surroundings: great is his astonishment on being ushered into a marble-paved court, in whose centre stand some handsome trees and a fountain whose waters lave a highly ornate marble parapet, while an arcade or alcove edged with silk divans fit for a palace of the "Arabian Nights" invites him to rest in the shade. No overlooking each other's gardens here:

in these courts one is absolutely hidden from the outside world. Such houses, of course, belong to the wealthy.

These people are not unkindly. The Jews indeed were believed to have had a hand in the dreadful massacre of Christians, or at all events to have borne the latter no goodwill; but those old animosities, if they ever existed, have died away: the people who own this jewel residence are most civil. You chanced to be passing at the moment when the master of the house was coming out: observing your surprise on catching a glimpse of the rich and rare interior—for he stood in the open doorway—he smiled, and beckoned with the hand, indicating that he gave permission, nay invitation, to enter.

The Jewish quarter, though larger than the Christian, is of no great extent: the width of this the southern half of the city will not exceed a couple of hundred yards—that is, from Straight Street to the south wall—and the Jewish quarter is but the eastern portion of this.

Returning to the striped barracks in Straight Street, and pursuing that thoroughfare still westward, one finds after another two hundred paces or so, that the roadway is roofed: from this point to the western extremity it is spanned by a vaulted lead-covered roof. Here the shops begin. Straight Street is the backbone of Damascus: the numerous lanes that lead off it on either side, though not invariably opposite to each other, yet for the most part resemble the spines that branch off the backbone of a flat fish. A short distance inside the covered way, a thoroughfare strikes to the right. It is somewhat difficult to follow, but if one has the perseverance to proceed, not discouraged by having to try first one and then another of several routes that embarrass the stranger once he has got well down towards the lower parts, it will be found to lead to a gate on the north side of the city.

Speaking of gates, one must not be understood to mean portals that can be opened and shut: Damascus is no

longer properly enclosed within walls : a great portion of the wall still stands, and the entrance by the east gate is actually through a gateway, but one passes through the most of these gates without being aware of having passed out or in, the wall being hidden with buildings within and without. The surest sign of the presence of a gate is a bit of roofed way, with native *cafés*, and a variety of little stalls and shops : a small bazaar, in fact, marks each gate : it is as though the great central bazaar were the parent root of the plant, and those at the several gates the small roots that, establishing themselves wherever they find earth, draw sustenance therefrom, without ceasing their connection with the mother stem.

Outside this gate one comes upon the river again : it has originally skirted the north side of the town, flowing just outside the wall ; but from about this point westward the wall has disappeared, and now a vast suburb has grown up on the north side of the river.

Returning by this lane to Straight Street, and following the one that goes off opposite to it to the south, you penetrate a very squalid neighbourhood among stables, granaries, and other dingy, lofty buildings between which the narrow paths are so overshadowed as to give to this district a peculiarly gloomy aspect. Few pedestrians are to be seen : a veiled woman flits silently like a shadow, out of one alley, and as silently disappears into another. But here, again, perseverance is rewarded : one emerges from the gloom into a busy covered way where quite a little fair is being carried on. The covering of the way is rude, and so low that a large load on a mule's back would come well-nigh to touching it ; but it affords shelter from the sunshine, and has about it an air of considerable comfort. Here are muleteers who have stopped to have a drink from the water-seller's bottle. This man, more gaily attired than the ordinary citizen, and adorned with a bright striped apron, jingles a pair of brass cups in one

hand. His glass bottle—large, and transparent, and slung over his neck—contains pieces of lemon floating in the water, which is said to be sweetened. The people clearly like it: he has plenty of customers. Here are boys at play: they seem to regard the gate as the centre of life in their neighbourhood. Here lie a good many dogs: they choose the very middle of the road for a sleeping-place. It is surprising with what care the beasts of burden step over them. And should one of them by any chance be touched, it at once gets up, and gathering its wits together in a dreamy sort of way, moves to the side. It immediately returns, and curls itself up again. The dog sleeps all day, and holds carnival all night.

Outside this gate—the only one on the south side of the city—one stands in a rather squalid street: many rough men lie about the sides of it; the roadway is uneven and uncared-for; the place is suggestive of a costermongers' quarter; and if you follow the road eastward, so as to proceed that way to the east gate of the city, you soon pass between vast heaps of rubbish—the city *dépôt*, apparently. Do not be surprised to see by the side of the long heaps an old woman seated begging.

Taking the opposite direction—that is, proceeding westward from the gate—and traversing the busy rustic street just referred to, you would shortly strike the great thoroughfare that runs south from the west end of Straight Street.

At the south back of this rustic road or rather street lies a vast cemetery, where among other illustrious dead, Buckle the historian sleeps.

Instead of following this outside street, you return to Straight Street—not however as you came, but by another lane parallel to that, and a little way west of it.

Emerging once more into Straight Street, you are

this time opposite to a wide street that descends to the north. Now you are getting into busier regions. This wide street—covered also—contains many shops, mostly confectioners' and bakers'. Half-way down, it narrows. Here are many khans. These are roofed and domed courts, entered by a handsome gateway or doorway—of the stalactite style of architecture so common in the East, and so effective—possessing a fountain after the manner of the rich dwellings already described, and filled with goods. Inside each of these khans there are many shops, each shop being but a room, and these upstairs and downstairs. In shops of this kind the merchant has no means of exhibiting his goods to the public: all is hid: and it is only after a customer has arrived and signified his desire to purchase, that the merchant gets out the key, and opening the door of his den, invites him to enter. Most of these are wholesale establishments, but they do not turn away a humble retail purchaser; for you have made purchases in them. A day or so after you arrived in Damascus the dragoman brought yourself and some others to one of these places in the next street. A great variety of silk goods was turned out. Some made purchases: you deferred, knowing you were to remain a considerable time in the city. On returning, at a later period, alone, and knocking at the door of the particular room, a merchant came forward and beckoned you to follow him upstairs. Whether he was a member of the firm whose door you tried, or a rival, you never learned, though you have your own opinion. At all events he displayed to view the usual endless variety of silk goods. And, probably to avoid delay, he sold you what you wished at a fixed price. The hotel people, when you showed them the things and named the price, were surprised to learn that you had had no beating down to do.

At the foot of this street—it is only about a couple of

hundred yards in length—you are close by the Great Mosque, Naaman's "House of Rimmon."

Almost adjoining the south wall of the mosque stands the most remarkable private house in Damascus. It belonged to a rich merchant, whose khan, near the top of the street, is also a wonder among khans, being surmounted by many domes, and containing quite a district of shops. The house is now in the hands of the original proprietor's three sons, and affords accommodation amply sufficient for the three households. Approaching the entrance, a stranger would never suspect he was about to enter a luxurious dwelling: the causeway leading up the slope, off the east side of the street, suggests a blind alley, and not a too sweet one. Advancing, one enters a passage. Entered, it leads to the right, then to the left, and, on the left again, is the door of the court. There is much ceremony here, although it is very greatly affected, as the glory has departed, and the people now make a small addition to their income by exhibiting the house. They profess that you must wait outside this door, until any of the female inmates that may be in the court have been gathered in and housed. The wait, however, gives time to inspect a curious arrangement for the reception of parcels. By the side of the door is a small opening, inside which is a horizontal wheel made of wood, and practically the same thing as is known in the West under the name dumb waiter. It is lined with wood round the circumference, and is thus formed into a drum; but one compartment is left unlined. Into this receptacle the parcel is placed; the people inside the court turn the drum until the side containing the parcel has come round. They can, if necessary, deposit a return parcel, or a note, and turn the drum again till the compartment faces the messenger outside. In this way neither the messenger nor the receiver of the message can see the one the other.

Entering the court, one is indeed surprised. The first thought that occurs to one is, How extensive! Here is a quadrangular court, stretching east and west, of apparently not much less than a hundred paces in length. And how level, and how exquisitely paved with stone of various colours! Trees in abundance, and fountains, and doors opening all around upon the court, and every bit of wall a work of art—to come in here from those narrow lanes outside is to witness a startling transformation scene. And the reception rooms are in keeping with the court: what with the rich gilding, and the white marble, you seem to be looking upon the results of a supreme attempt at utilizing the resources of wealth. Some of these rooms are now dismantled: Westerns would designate the whole concern a folly.

These khans in the street outside are substantial buildings, and not inelegant: what with the lofty stalactite doorway already noticed, and the horizontally striped black and yellow front wall, a khan is one of the ornaments of the town.

Returning to Straight Street, and pursuing one's way still west, one passes shortly the top of the Silk Bazaar. It descends towards the Great Mosque, parallel to the bazaar last traversed. It is needless to enter it at present.

Still pursuing Straight Street, meeting many pedestrians of both sexes and all ages, and not a few horsemen and muleteers, one reaches the west end of the covered way. Here are cross-roads. The one that runs north and south is a monster thoroughfare. Across it, you follow the prolongation of Straight Street, but henceforward it is only a shadow of itself, and after two hundred paces it comes to a peaceful end at the western outskirts of the town.

You have now time to observe that, for the last hundred paces of Straight Street before reaching the great cross-

thoroughfare, the street has been double : a second covered bazaar, divided by a partition of houses from the first one, has been running alongside ; and, reaching the great crossing, present at it, as it were, the muzzles of a double-barrelled gun. The same double-barrelled arrangement continues for a short way on the west side of the cross-road.

This great cross-road is the main thoroughfare of Damascus. It is a wide road, lined on either side with a row of large lime trees, whose leafy branches seem to scatter refreshment upon the busy throng passing to and fro underneath. There are no wheeled conveyances or carts of any kind to be seen in this thoroughfare, but what with beasts of burden, and all sorts and conditions of people, it takes one all one's time to cross it.

Turning into this road, to the left, or south, one almost immediately finds it become a vast tunnel. Descending this spacious covered way, which reminds one of a large railway-station, one observes on either hand a row of stalls or shops where all sorts of articles required by country people are laid out in abundance. Here are shoe stalls ; here again a store of men's garments ; here tubs and dairy utensils ; here field and garden seeds ; and so on ; for this is the great south road, leading into the heart of the country.

Down through the wide and lofty covered way—it is not more than a hundred paces long—one discovers that the road, before reaching the country, forms an apparently interminable peasant suburb. On the left, for a considerable distance, lies the vast cemetery already referred to. The right side displays a great variety of buildings, among the rest a mosque of alternate layers of black and white stone. This road runs straight south for nearly half a mile, the cemetery skirting it on the east side all the way, and then bends. Here, a police office or guard-house facing you, you turn to the right slightly, and the

street stretches out before you for more than a mile. It is a stirring sight : the traffic is enormous.

Onward, from this bend, there are houses on both sides. And not only so : innumerable lanes enter from either side. In penetrating the side districts one has much the same sort of experiences as one had in the quarters off Straight Street. But the work carried on here differs from that of the central quarters : it is here that all sorts of implements required by the peasantry are made. Passing along you observe the smith at work : blowing his big bellows, he draws from the furnace a piece of red-hot iron, and laying it on the anvil proceeds to beat it into the desired shape : the workshop is open to the street, and in dimensions about two paces square. On the other side is a grain store, with large arched front : some men sit on the floor smoking narghiles. Then a carpenter's shop, where every piece of wood is recognizable as some part or other of the wooden plough. They seem to select pieces that naturally are about the required size and shape. The ploughs in use in all these parts resemble an anchor in a distant sort of way, the upper leg of the anchor, however, being straight, and pierced by a cross-pin to hold by. A long thin piece—natural also—serves to connect the body of the plough with the cross-bar that rests upon the oxens' foreheads, and by which it is drawn. Then here is a barber's shop. Here, again, is an open-fronted shed in which cotton is being freed of the seeds and other portions that adhere to it in the plant state. This process is performed by means of a machine resembling a one-stringed musical instrument : the tight string is let go with violence against the cotton, making it froth up, so to speak, into a fluffy mass. And here are dye-works, the blue cotton cloth hanging to dry on the housetops like bunting. And here are sheds for the putting up of cattle.

Nor are mosques awanting : all along, at intervals,

their minarets rise like majestic milestones marking the way to holy Mecca: And when at length the end is reached, and the road approaches the forest, you stand and gaze after it into the distance, thinking of the motley companies that have travelled and will yet travel it; for this is the pilgrim route.

Another monster cemetery! Unfenced, and thick with grave mounds, it skirts the road on the left or south; and you stroll into it. Following it up, you find it extends along by the south back of the suburb, and is very much in keeping with the rustic character of the district, for the mounds are more roughly constructed than those in the city cemeteries proper: the clay is more strawy, for one thing; and then, the mounds are, many of them, of such fantastic shapes, standing on end like Egyptian mummy cases, and apparently meant to call up visions of ghastly monsters, that you almost feel scared as you pass under the shadows of their great outstretched tops.

Here is a fallen-in grave. It is prudent to pass on and not pry into such secrets: these bodies are buried without coffins, being simply deposited in a hole, and a sort of rude arch of stones built over. It is this arch that has got broken; and you can hardly help seeing into the interior. Typhoid fumes exhale: it is well to give the opening a wide berth.

Then here among the graves is a stagnant pool in a great hollow: it also scatters broadcast the seeds of death. No wonder these poor people want vast cemeteries.

And now, at length, running water, and some meal-mills—still by the edge of the cemetery—beyond which the back of the suburb begins to show signs of life, much spinning going on, and rope and twine making. This is a busy scene; but withal most filthy. A pool, several hundreds of paces long, gives the promise of a pleasant variety amidst the arid wastes of tow-workings, but when you stand by its edge the enchantment is gone: it is

literally alive with frogs : the creatures stick their heads out of the water in myriads—and such monsters they are—and positively seem to be accosting or threatening you in chorus.

On the farther edge of this unsavoury pool—for the water though transparent is of a yellowish hue, and emits a slight aroma—stands a vast camp of black tents : it appears to be a permanent settlement. The occupants you would style gipsies. They possess donkeys ; many children play in front of the tents ; and a goodly number of untidy women are squatted about the tent doors ; but men seem to be scarce, and apparently no work is being done. Those people live on little ; but one sometimes wonders where even that little can possibly come from.

The forest lies but a few paces off. A road that passes this encampment, and speedily pierces the thicket, seems a much frequented highway. You penetrate for half a mile, just to see what like the interior of the forest here looks, and are surprised at the numbers of peasants you meet, some on donkeys, some on foot. The road itself is lonely, and the thick woods on either hand are not unsuggestive of a lurker, a lyer-in-wait ; but there is little likelihood of anything of that kind occurring, though possibly one of the numerous half-naked madmen about the place might swoop down upon a stranger. The calm, dignified bearing of an approaching camel dispels such vain imaginings, and you begin picturing to yourself the happy households in the many forest-villages, and the beasts at rest after the toils of the day.

Returning to the back of the suburb, and pursuing one's course, one reaches the elbow, by the already mentioned guard-house, and enters the busy thoroughfare once more. The contrast between the quiet of the back quarters, and the bustle here in the street, is most striking : it comes upon one as quite a surprise. There would appear to be

a never-ending procession of riders, some on camels, some on horses, many on donkeys. And such oddities many of those people look! They are very unlike the polished Damascenes, whether in person or attire. They come, in fact, from the country, and some of them from great distances: the black kerchief over the head and shoulders, the striped camel's hair over-garment, the bare breast, the sun-wrinkled face, and especially the long rickety spear—these are marks of remote rusticity.

It is touching to see the shepherd, a fleecy blanket over his shoulders, and a staff in his hand, pacing in front of his flock: he has but to sound b-r-r-r and even the lambs are on the alert to see that they do not lose him. Were the poor things forcibly driven to slaughter it would be less affecting: to see them, in this crowded road, using all their wits to keep an eye on their shepherd, and that too in order that they may reach those dreadful shambles you have just come past, is more than you can stand.

The boundless cemetery, on the right hand as one returns towards the city proper, is intensely interesting. Intersected by public roads, and dotted with quaint villages or bits of suburb, it is somewhat suggestive of the state of things the imagination has tried to picture, not when the world shall have become over-populated and men shall have no room to live, but when the days of the last man shall be drawing nigh, and nought remains but graves. Here in these quaint little hamlets—for they are to all intents and purposes cut off from the city, and have a style of their own—it must in a sense be good to dwell, if, as the wise man says, it is beneficial to be reminded of the end.

Mohammed's daughter Fatima sleeps here. The majority of the graves are quite unmarked: that is to say, beyond the clay mound, there is nothing to indicate a grave at all; and it can only be by counting the number

of a particular mound that the relatives can recognize the resting-place of their dead.

But the rich, of course, build mausoleums of greater or less magnificence. What with these, and the booths erected by the fairly well-to-do, and the undergrowth, so to speak, of common graves, the cemetery is not only picturesque, but assumes the aspect of a veritable city of the dead, wherein the great and the small have met together. You linger long in this interesting locality. It possesses a peculiar fascination for you. Day after day you have come and waded among the straw-coloured graves. Not a blade of grass: all is bare clay: yet the place has a beauty of its own.

Out into the street, and up through the great tunnel again, and you have exhausted the south side. Before the tunnel is reached, however, a mosque of rarer quality than the many, rising over the vaulted roof of it, attracts one's attention. It stands just at the farther or north end of the tunnel, on the right hand to one passing up from the south, as you now do. The people of Damascus are proud of this structure. The entire mosque is celebrated for its beauty; but its minaret is the most remarkable portion of it. This is round, coated with glazed tiles, possessed of a balcony railing which can be compared to nothing but lace, and is itself green throughout—they speak of it as the green minaret. Many are of opinion that the building has had something to do with the termination of the south colonnade of Straight Street. At all events, it is regarded with peculiar veneration.

Passing northwards up the great thoroughfare, and admiring again the large lime trees that line it on either side, one finds considerable difficulty in progressing, so densely crowded is it. But one is not wasting time though compelled to stand, for a little, bolt upright against a shop front: there is plenty to look at, and to wonder at, whether in the people or the buildings. Over

there, on the left or west, is a handsome bath. The branches gently brush its striped front wall, and serve to hide it partially from the public eye. On the other side is a little mosque, its old-fashioned square minaret rising right from the street, and the muezzin leans leisurely over the wooden railing and calls forth his summons to prayer. This is probably the least lofty minaret you have ever encountered : it is not more than three small storeys from the ground to where the man stands. And it looks so odd to see this priest stationed as it were on a hustings platform but a little way above the warping crowd : it is as though some one were to open a window in Piccadilly, and lifting up his voice, remind the passing crowds that the hour of their devotions had again come round. Only it is very much quieter here than in Piccadilly : not a single vehicle have you ever seen pass this way.

A fine red and white striped mosque adorns the opposite side of the street. And now the braziers are at work on your right : in small open recesses, elevated to the height of a table, they work away in the face of the crowd. And here, on the left, is the densest crowd you have anywhere seen in the city : the people are pressing each other like a plague of vermin. The end of the covered way they are pushing into and out of, looks into this street : you can glance up it as you pass in front ; or, better still, get into the throng and push your way in. This is the old-clothes market. Many other articles, however, are displayed for sale here : all sorts of old iron things, such as stirrups, pieces of chain, nails, locks, and numberless articles which it would be impossible to conceive any person purchasing or even accepting in a present. The covered lane is short, and leads to a drill-ground behind. You came up here the other evening, attracted by the strains of music, and the bright moonlight : the military band was playing, and a considerable crowd had gathered to listen. These people go but little out at night : as you

came along on that occasion, led to the spot by the sound of the music, the streets were deserted—it might have been midnight.

Issuing from the old-clothes market into the great thoroughfare again, you observe the mouth of a busy covered way just opposite—that is, on the east side. This is the Greek Bazaar, the most popular in the city. It runs at right angles from this thoroughfare, that is, as already stated, east; and leads down to the west or main entrance of the Great Mosque. You pass it at present, and proceed down the thoroughfare—for you are now on the northern declivity, Straight Street lying along the ridge, and the city sloping from it north and south.

You stop a moment to look over the shoulders of a knot of people intently watching some object by the side of the street. It is a dog, in the agonies of death. As if to cool its burning heart, it trails itself back and forward through a small mud-puddle, rolling over, and getting up, and falling back again: it is seeking rest and finding none.

The thoroughfare now sweeps, with a gentle curve, westward. Going down the hill, you have on the right more braziers at work, and gunsmiths; and these one-storey open stalls, with their varied stock of second-hand pistols, guns, daggers, swords, and all that kind of goods, possess a wonderful attraction and charm for the peasant: never do you pass this way without seeing numbers of country lads intent on purchasing some old weapon—a long gun, or a pair of rusty flint pistols. To-day a stranger—whence, you cannot guess—stands in front of one of these stores. Six feet six at the very least, though seemingly slender yet of powerful build, pale-faced, black-bearded, stern of countenance, and though not young as straight as a poplar of the forest, he attracts a good deal of notice. Some sheik, no doubt; but woe to the man among his people who

offends that lord! Such another would Samson have been, had he lived a few years longer.

Nor are the women unrepresented, by any means, in the Walhalle: by the side of the street, just at the south end of the great tunnel you have recently come up through, sat a woman selling some sort of country produce. She chanced to rise, as you passed, and her form and bearing struck you. Up in years, and heavy almost to unwieldiness, she nevertheless recalled some such one as Deborah of old.

Through here, on the right—appropriately enough among the stalls where weapons of warfare are sold—opens the entrance into the citadel. No one is admitted. You may look in, however, and inspect it also from behind. Lying behind the one-storey shops that face the street it is no part of the prospect, except that the ponderous square towers of brown stone-work rise above the shops. This is a large quadrangular enclosure, with towers at its corners, and the river flowing by its north end.

If, instead of turning to the left and going west at the bend of the thoroughfare, one were to proceed straight forward, one would enter a covered bazaar which begins here and runs northward, into the horse-market. It is the saddlers' bazaar. Brilliant with the mixed hues of red and yellow which predominate in saddles and bridles, it has a cleaner look than most of the others. At its lower end, just where it opens into the Horse Market, stands the gallows tree, a plane of enormous proportions. Hollow, though still fresh and vigorous and showing its normal foliage, the void measures five paces in diameter. Inside labours an industrious joiner, who makes excellent boxes, using in their construction instead of nails wooden pegs dipped in glue.

But leaving that bazaar untraversed, and turning westward, one immediately passes a bath: attention is directed

to it by the display of bath towels hung on strings between the trees. A jeweller emerges from a shop on the left and begs you to come and inspect his goods: almost every time you pass, this man comes out, like a spider.

Westward a couple of hundred yards, and one issues into a handsome square, by the south-east corner of it. This is the square at whose west side the river disappears, arched over so as to admit of the formation of the square.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAMASCUS (continued).

THE government buildings—the Serai—form the south side of the square. These buildings are two storeys in height, the under storey yellow, and the upper white. The numerous windows are furnished with green Venetian blinds outside. A pair of sentry boxes and several soldiers adorn the entrance passage. On the north side of the square stand two large blocks. These are the post-office and the court-house. On the east side—beginning at the corner at which you have entered the square—stands first of all the prison. This building is quite a centre of attraction: the friends of the prisoners come here in great numbers, to talk to the incarcerated through the window gratings. Native *cafés* occupy the remainder of this side. The river flows underneath one of them, appearing for a moment on the edge of the square before it burrows again. A covered bazaar penetrates this side of the square near the north-east corner. Across the entrance to this bazaar hangs a heavy chain, under which one must stoop to enter. This is to prevent riders, and also beasts of burden, from traversing the bazaar. This bazaar would bring you, in a hundred paces, to the Horse Market.

The west side of the square is open, with the exception of a large square two-storey block, standing detached, which might pass for a town-hall, but was formerly the prison. Beyond this gardens stretch westward along the

south bank of the river. The hotel, as already stated, faces the river, just where the latter disappears under the square. It is a corner house, a street running north off the square between it and the post-office. In the centre of the square is a circular basin of water, some fifty feet in diameter. Its kerb—for it is not surrounded by a parapet, but is on a level with the square, and one might easily walk into it unawares—is usually occupied by women, who sit around, their backs to the water, as close as they can pack themselves. The steps of the stone stairs outside the disused prison block are also usually packed with women.

The square is always more or less busy : to stand on the hotel balcony and look across here, is like watching a troubled sea. Now a troop of school-boys trip across : they are in uniform—miniature soldiers. Now some transient excitement calls a knot of idlers together to push, and gesticulate, and drop apart again. Now a horse has got its hind-leg over the carriage pole. To assist at this function the entire square has gathered around. Now a young woman, smoking a cigarette, has taken to teasing the big boy who keeps the sweets' stall : do what he can to protect his master's wares, she manages to get hold of a piece, which she at once hands to a passing child.

The cab-stand of Damascus is at the back of the disused prison—between it and the gardens. It is therefore directly opposite the hotel : you look right across the river to it. Many are the amusing scenes one witnesses here. For instance, in that open two-horse vehicle, a woman, draped in the common yellow and black striped sheet, has been sitting for the last twenty minutes : they are waiting in the hope of being joined by more passengers. Another woman, dragging after her four children, the eldest of whom carries a fifth, approaches. Cabby, a rough and ragged fellow, in blue cotton knickerbocker

suit, with much red cloth wrapped round his waist, enters into negotiations with her. A neighbour cabby, in yellow frock, soon joined by another, a tall Nubian in white coat, tattered blue breeches, and riding-boots, assists in the bargain, the result being that the cab door is opened, and the fares are packed in. A hitch has occurred, apparently; for cabby, after receiving his money, hands it back—there has been some misunderstanding as to what was to be paid, or the coin tendered is doubtful—and the travellers descend, leaving the original occupant alone once more. After a seeming dissolution of negotiations, both parties having turned their backs, a reconciliation is effected, and again the cab is packed. Cabby mounts leisurely, and after a conversation with a brother Jehu who has just driven up to the stand, he whips his pair off, shouting and singing at the top of his voice.

One afternoon in the week, the women have an outing to this portion of the river. The road that skirts the south bank—if you can call a low wall a bank—is on those occasions quite filled: there is no room to pass. Nor would any of the male sex be permitted to pass: soldiers are told off to stand sentry at the ends, and prevent intrusion. The north bank of the river, being skirted by a street, is not available for this holiday-making; but, above the first or lowest bridge, where the town comes to an end, they occupy both banks.

Talking of bridges: Westerns might learn a lesson here. This is a stream of considerable width and depth, and there seems no reason to suppose that it escapes being flooded at times, yet the three bridges that span it are toys: the arches are not any higher than it is absolutely necessary they should be, the intention being to keep the roads all on a level. And that level is only the height of the side walls of the river—some six feet.

The women, on their holiday afternoon, promenade on the roads on either side of the river, sit by the far side of

the road, also on the side next the river, perched quite on the brink, and in fact monopolize the entire place. The squatted ones group themselves in threes and fours, and pull industriously at the narghile. Some young girls are of the party, but infants none. The space set apart for this recreation extends from the square up to the Merj or meadow where the cavalry drill—some two or three hundred yards.

A low parapet fences the river on the north side, from the point where the town begins and the road becomes a street; also across the end, by the square, where the waters rush into the tunnels; but nowhere else: you might walk right over. You have often trembled for the loafers who sit on the cross parapet by the square: it is but two feet high, and were any of them to fall back over, he would be swept under the ground like a dropped leaf from the trees alongside. You speak of this to some of the people, and they tell you of a case of that kind: they had to lift the square in part, in order to extricate the corpse.

A considerable area of building lies to the north of the square: this is the northern suburb—you have already seen the southern. If you stroll up the street that runs north from the square by the east end of the hotel, you will find a district very much resembling the other non-bazaar parts of the town—oppressively quiet, apparently but by no means really deserted, and full of blind alleys. It is worth while to explore it, though for nothing else than the entertainment of watching the faces of any casual pedestrians you meet: knowing, as they well do, that you are on a track which in twenty or thirty more paces comes to an end, and seeing in your gait the manifest expectation of yet a long way to go, they naturally pause to witness your ignominious discomfiture.

Taking the first turning to the right after passing up this street by the hotel gable, one gets into a busier

thoroughfare. At the corner, one of the myriad dogs of Damascus lies curled up, sound asleep. These animals are all of one breed—a good deal of the fox. Their coat is tawny, somewhat resembling a lion's; the hair is about the length of a collie's; and the animal itself is of about the size of a collie. Mangy and full of sores, they are pitiable objects, and one would suppose the sight of their patent miseries would excite compassion in any human breast; but to-day you witness a fresh proof to the contrary. A small boy, whose father stands looking on, has lifted a stone which tasks his energies to carry. Struggling with his burden till he stands over the sleeping dog, he deliberately lets go. The poor dog's awakening may be imagined. Howling piteously, it makes off as fast as its damaged limbs will carry it. And yet the Damascus dog is not invariably a slinking spiritless cur: it was only the other day you saw one of them silently fly at a boy, and knock him over. But as a rule they are harmless.

Down this street—eastward—you soon reach the Horse Market. Before coming out into the open you pass what used to be the only hotel of the place. It is now a tobacco factory. The people tell you of a fortune made, a husband dying, a widow marrying a handsome Arab, Lothario squandering all, the lady lying in prison for debt.

The Horse Market is an open space, nearly as large as the great square. The buildings surrounding it, however, are of a very different class from those around the square: here are vegetable stalls, and stores of country produce in general. And the ground is rough and stony, and not over clean. Yet, to look into the court of that mosque alongside, and see the water pouring over the parapet of the customary well—they can flood those places at will—and washing the lovely pavement, you can hardly feel as if in slums after all.

There are not more than a dozen horses here to-day.

A knot of rough-looking men are engaged in bargaining about them, or at any rate lending their presence. One of the beasts has to be captured—they are all loose: neither halter nor anything else to hold them by. A movement is made with the view of surrounding the herd, which timidly huddle together like scared sheep; when, with the swiftness of a lightning flash, a man darts at the neck of the particular beast wanted, and fastens himself on to its mane. Sticking there, he reminds you of the dreadful creatures in Dante hanging on by the boat. In reality, however, he is more like a harpooner carried off by the whale; for no sooner does the beast feel his grasp than off it goes at full speed, as if in a circus. People are running in all directions to get out of the way; and the stall-keepers are casting anxious glances at their wares. The excitement is short-lived: the courageous capturer is soon shaken off; and now everybody is in terror lest the poor man be trodden to death. The work of capturing has to be begun over again. You wait a long time in vain to see it finished.

A great peasant thoroughfare runs east from the Horse Market: it corresponds to the one that runs west or south-west on the south side of the town. Here, as in the south one, all sorts of articles required by the peasantry and farmers are to be had. Here works the wooden-plough maker; here the smith; here the cooper; here the copper-worker. Here also are grain stores, and mills. And what strikes you most of all is the vast quantity of timber in the wood-yards: myriads of tall poplars, more or less slender, stand piled up on end, unbarked but cleaned of branches, and ready for the builder's use.

Pursuing this thoroughfare, among the dense troops of country people, and keeping clear now of a laden donkey, now of a camel, one wanders towards the extremity, having gone a long way from home, almost without

noticing the fact. This lively thoroughfare lands one not far off the north-east corner of the city, in the neighbourhood of the women's east-end gathering place, where you saw them holding holiday by the river. A good way, however, before it gets that length it has ceased to be a street: the houses have come to an end, and it is a country road, hemmed in between walls of mud blocks: this is its character for the last two or three hundred paces before it crosses the Aleppo road. Across that road, it is but a little way down to the mills on the river.

Returning by the way you have come, and wondering whether the beggar woman will still be standing in that lonely part between the walls—it is all about equally lonely—and whether she will expect another coin, you regain the outskirts. Just here on the right, is the residence of the English Consul: you knock at the rather shabby gate, and find the master at home. This, like the fine houses in the Jewish quarter, is a surprise to one seeing it for the first time: the contrast between the poor-looking wall outside, and the marble pavement and richly decorated surroundings of the court, is so sharp as to produce something akin to a shock. You sit on the divan in the alcove, and finally adjourn to a pet of a room just alongside. This is bordered with silk divans, these being almost the only articles of furniture. Here coffee is served, in cups of the size of a thimble.

Resuming the return journey, you encounter the same scenes as before, peasants of both sexes whacking and pushing their beasts, water-sellers clattering with their brass cups, camels laden with timber, and dogs lying asleep among your feet.

You turn aside to the left or south to enjoy the shade of the covered way, and the subdued bustle, at the gate which connects this part of the suburb with the original city.

And a little farther on, you turn aside again to another gate, this last being near by the citadel, and therefore quite close to the Horse Market.

There are, in all, four gates on the north side. They are, as already remarked, not gates proper: you would hardly suspect you were passing through a gate were it not for the little cluster of covered ways, repetitions, after a fashion, of the bazaar district within. These little bits of covered way each remind one of a section of a country fair, if one could think of the market-place as covered all over with a low roof: turning, now to one side, now to another, sweatmeats, and bread, and figs spread out for sale, one fancies oneself a small boy again, bent on buying gilded gingerbread.

And the bath too, and the *café*, and probably the mosque—for the Muslim has great trafficking with all three institutions—are here, and they lend the charm of picturesqueness to the scene. This they do all the more, from your point of view, because they are in a manner forbidden to you: not that you have not entered these *cafés*, but they supply nothing you want—the hired narghile not being at all in your way—and the mosque is sacred, and the bath too. But you may look into them. The court of the mosque is usually up a few steps, the bath as much down. The former has about it an air of perfect peacefulness, the worshipper dipping his hands in the central parapet-surrounded octagonal pool before proceeding to his devotions; and as for the latter, it is suggestive of a luxurious wash-house, towels in heaps upon heaps meeting the eye, and some aged Sybarite kneeling as among bed-clothes on the elevated divan by the back wall, yet in form and visage not unlike the patriarchs of old, and going at his prayers.

Once more in the Horse Market, you pass to the southwest corner, attracted thither by the rushing sound of the river. The waters pass under the *café*. The Damascenes

rather affect this arrangement : they construct the building as if making a bridge, the bridge being the floor ; and the windows look down into the stream.

From this point you might either pass right up the narrow street that here runs south out of the Horse Market to the main thoroughfare—your old friend—that leads eastward from the great square ; or you might return to the gallows tree on the south edge of the same market and traverse the saddlers' bazaar, previously referred to. In either case, you get eventually into the main thoroughfare. Your object, now, is to enter the Greek bazaar, which opens, it will be remembered, off the main thoroughfare, opposite to the old-clothes bazaar already seen.

The Greek bazaar is old-fashioned, being low-roofed and narrow, and rather dark. Nevertheless it is one of the busiest, if not the busiest. Here stall after stall of guns and pistols, garments of the richest materials, brass bowls of cunning workmanship, jewellery, and what not, captivates the eye of the peasant who stalks along as in a dreamland, and is not devoid of interest for the Western either. In this bazaar, unlike the others, one is frequently invited to inspect the goods : the stall-owner holds up some gorgeous article of female apparel, or a piece of silk curtain inwrought with glittering gold, and solicits your consideration. He probably inveigles you into a back room, where the usual brass bowls and trays are piled up in chaotic abundance, and many rare ornaments in furniture stand around. But after the first few days they leave you alone, and then you can wander to and fro, stopping to inspect the goods or passing on, just as you please.

There is a break in the continuity of this bazaar : after traversing it for a couple of hundred yards, you stoop and pass under a ponderous chain hung across, and a few paces farther on enter a more lofty-roofed and wider

street. Before entering under this roof, you might turn to the left, and so proceed down by the back of the citadel to the river, which here flows aboveground for a brief space. That street is almost exclusively devoted to brass-nut shops. These nuts resemble in size and shape a goose-egg, and are meant to serve the same purpose as a cocoa-nut in the economy of a tobacco-pipe: the bowl containing the tobacco is attached to the nut through one hole, and the mouth-piece through another: and the nut is partially filled with water to cool the smoke.

Continuing one's march down the modern portion of the Greek bazaar, one is surprised at the throngs of women. This is the drapers' department; and it appears to be the daily task of the Damascus matron to wander to this bazaar, and take care that no bargain is let slip. There are no signs above the shops in Damascus—if you except just one or two Greek tailors' establishments at the top of this portion of the bazaar—and the women do not seem to want to be directed to any particular shop: they warp like bees, twisting and intertwisting, progressing and retrograding, now stopping to listen to that impudent boy who stands on the shop platform displaying to view a piece of print, and shouting the price, now giving heed to a rival shouter, and again passing on and inspecting a piece exposed to view in another shop. These women appear to spend a good part of their day here; and here the traveller has exceptional opportunities of studying them, as for the most part the veil is either pulled off altogether, or at least pushed to one side sufficiently to render it null.

All the way down to the Great Mosque this bazaar is literally crowded with women. Occasionally a horseman comes riding down, or a string of camels is dragged through, and then the female mass has to give way for the moment, but they immediately fill up the passage again. The women of Damascus seem to have a luxu-

rious life: household duties they pay but little attention to: probably they gag their children, and lock the door, and sally forth. As for the husbands, how they get their meals, or where they spend their time, is a mystery.

Damascus is wholly given over to the women: the petroleum throwers of Paris come nearest to these: but those are a handful. In all other towns you find a mixture of the sexes in the thoroughfares: so you do here: but the men are "not in it."

To enter the Great Mosque one has to arrange through the consul. A charge of about a pound sterling is made, in addition to the expenses of guides and attendants. It is therefore customary for the people staying at the hotel to make up a party, and share the cost. The day and hour of visit being arranged, the consul's Kawass or official attendant arrives to head the party. This functionary presents a rather startling appearance: a turban of silk and gold, a short red jacket richly braided, dark blue petticoat gathered below the knees, and gold braided gaiters of the same stuff—these garments, added to which are a pair of wings flowing behind his shoulders, and a sword hung by his side, render him quite a feature in the life of the streets.

Headed by this man, and accompanied by two or three guides from the hotel, you set out to do the mosque. The townspeople understand the procession, and take no notice: unless indeed some half-witted creature chances to see you, when he may be expected to join the party. The first time you visited the mosque, you found that one of these loose madmen had attached himself to you. The poor fellow—a young man—kept reiterating a peculiar call which sounded like "Yokki-yōick." He would dart on in front for a few paces, yell "Yokki-yōick," and dart back again to the rear, repeating this at brief intervals.

At the foot of the drapers' bazaar is a broad flight of steps, leading down to a short level bazaar which might

pass for an elongated porch in front of the mosque door, which stands open at the farther end of it. There are in fact the remains of pillars at the top of this flight of steps : by getting on to the roofs of the houses about, the remains of an arch can be seen, showing that this has been a porch. Covered bazaars take off to either hand at the top of the steps : that to the left or north finds its way with difficulty to one of the gates—the second gate, counting from the west—and that on the right curves round to the south side of the mosque near by the famous house you have already noticed, and so into the bazaars that run south up to Straight Street.

The level paved passage between the foot of the steps and the mosque door is mostly occupied by bookshops. Here you would come if you wanted a Koran—though probably they would refuse to sell you one. You have not made the experiment, and consequently cannot say how far those calumnies are justly grounded ; but certainly the booksellers seem anything but anxious to dispose of their pamphlets : it suits them better to sit, swaying back and forward, their eyes intent on the page, and uttering a sing-song sound, like children in a school.

The last shop on the right is the exception : it sells, not books, but shoes. Here a halt is made in order to borrow slippers for the party. These are of the thinnest leather—soles and all alike—and you tie them over your boots. The chances are that before you have walked six steps they are coming off ; and after several vain attempts at fixing them, you give it up, and do the tour of the holy place with the slippers trailing behind, attached by the string to your ankle. At the start no one was half so energetic in fixing the slippers as Yokki-yōick.

The Great Mosque covers a considerable space, its length being about a hundred and fifty yards, and its breadth much the same. Not that the mosque proper covers all this space : it only occupies a slice of the south

side about forty yards in width. The whole front of the mosque is arched—an enclosed arcade as it were. The other three sides of the court are similarly arched—open arcades looking into the central area. The interior of the mosque proper is decidedly plain. The roof is of wood, arched, and covered with lead externally. The marble pillars have been whitewashed, as also most of the mosaics on the walls. This has been done in order to obliterate as far as possible all traces of Christian handiwork—for this was a Christian church before the days of the Muslims, and, oddly enough, the representation, in bronze, of a cup still adorns the east door.

There are no seats: the marble floor is covered with Persian carpets, the gifts of the rich pious. On these carpets the worshippers get down on their knees to perform their devotions. There are a dozen or two at prayer now. They kneel in two rows; and one facing them gives the stroke, so to speak. They take no notice of your presence. Nor do they mind though the open door reveals their movements to the whole street. This south door—unlike the others, which open into the court—opens right into the mosque: it stands open; and were it not for the piece of pavement set on edge, and which you want to step over in entering or going out, you might be inside before you knew where you were. All the doors are provided with a piece of pavement of this kind. It is about a foot and a half high, and serves to exclude the mud or the wet of the street without.

Proceeding towards the east end, and noting the handsome dome by the way, your attention is called to an erection resembling a hothouse, which they allege contains or contained the head of John the Baptist. One cannot see in, as it is curtained inside the glass.

In a small room on the east side of the court they point out the graves of the two murdered children, Hassan and Hussein. In the passage, before entering the room, they

call attention to a small hole in the wall. Through this, they say—for the grating is opposite to the graves within—the faithful may see paradise. Any who have tried it, however, have suffered for their rash intrusion; for a needle has been thrust into their eyes, and they have been dismissed with the consoling assurance that, having looked to see the land that is very far off, it would be impious to use the eyes to look on earthly things again. The guide-books have missed this.

In the room, in addition to the two little graves, are pictures of Mecca and Medina, poor prints. The former has a representation of the hill on which, according to the Muslim, Abraham sacrificed the ram as a burnt-offering. Medina possesses the prophet's tomb.

Across a lane, just without the north door of the mosque court, stands a small dome-roofed building containing the tomb of Saladin. There are in fact two graves here, side by side: the other is that of one of Saladin's generals, whose devotion and prowess entitle him to sleep by his master's side.

The Great Mosque boasts three minarets—one at either end of the mosque proper, and one in the middle of the north wall of the court. That on the north wall is called the Bride's minaret; that on the east end of the mosque the minaret of Jesus; the west-end one, the least esteemed of the three, you are permitted to ascend. It is named the West minaret. The view would call forth from a German the word *Wunderschön*. It is absolutely necessary to see Damascus from some such point as this to understand it. What strikes you most forcibly is the forest, that, seen from here, seems a vast hedge, closely bordering the town, like a fringe of green, and through which there seems to be no outlet. And the next thing that surprises you is the extent of the town of Salahiyeh that skirts the lower slopes of the Anti-Lebanon range, a couple of miles to the north. And as for the flat roofs,

and the railed housetops, and the corridor balconies, and the soft verdure of the grass that covers it all like a carpet, that alone is a sight not to be forgotten.

Over there, on a housetop, stands a man with a long slender pole in his hands. To its upper end is attached a sort of banner, which he waves backwards and forwards as a fisher casts a fly. This, they tell you, he does with the view of recalling his pigeons.

Before leaving the mosque, you enter once more to look around: you wish to satisfy yourself that the prayer niches are towards the south; for Kibla means south. They are so placed that the worshipper's face must be towards Mecca—the same thing.

A greatly revered dome, standing on pillars in the open court, is said to contain ancient books and other relics. It is never to be opened.

Many a time, passing these doors, have you looked into this court to observe the people at their prayers. To-day you see them more closely. Here comes an old man, barefooted: he has taken off his shoes before stepping over the pavement barrier, shaken them, and laid them down to await his return. Here, again, a small boy, getting down on his knees upon a rug, his face towards the front wall of the mosque, proceeds to copy the movements of his seniors. All sorts and conditions of men come here, but you see no women.

Departing by the east opening, one notes the cup on the door, and descending a few steps passes into a level paved street of some width though very short, and adorned with a well from whose pipe a jet of water constantly pours forth. Damascus is underlaid with innumerable water channels: everywhere you hear the sound of running water.

From this fountain one might work, in a short time, through tortuous passages to the third gate on the north side of the city—the third, that is, counting

from the west. The other day you were in that quarter, and met with a check in your progress through one of the narrowest of the lanes. A hubbub of children proclaimed that something was approaching. You had got half-way down the pass before it dawned upon you that in a few more steps you must literally rub shoulders with a bear—or retreat, which it would have been highly undignified to do. You advanced to meet the ungainly creature, and it did seem to eye you with evil intent, but it thought better, and behaved with perfect civility. It was led with a halter, and was not a very gigantic specimen, being one of the ordinary Syrian bears found in plenty on the Anti-Lebanons immediately to the north of the town.

By this fountain are flower-stalls. The specimens exposed for sale are not by any means exquisite: they rather resemble bunches of wild flowers. As you passed this spot one day in company with a young lad who affects to be considered a guide, and who had entertained vain hopes of being engaged by you in that capacity, a sudden impulse seized him to present you with one of those yellow bunches, for which he paid a trifle. How could you, after that, but give him some remuneration for the hour or two he had wandered with you, no matter that you yourself led the way?

Mounting the steps again towards this the east door of the mosque, and passing to the left, round to the south exterior of the building, one enters a long workshop. It is in reality many workshops; for here labour all or nearly all the cabinet-makers of the city. This covered street lies against the south wall of the mosque, and though open at the end you have just entered by, is closed at the other, and has quite the appearance of a comfortable workshop. Here the bulk of that inlaid mother-of-pearl wood-work for which Damascus is renowned is made. Chests of drawers, seats, mirror-frames, fancy pattens—

these are the staple articles manufactured of this material. At every step, all the way through, the same assortment of things meets the eye. And these cabinet-makers are not jealous of each other, apparently: indeed they would have a wretched existence if they were: for no article can be sold by one without the transaction being witnessed by several others. They seem a happy family; and it gives you pleasure to come here from time to time, and wade among the shavings, and watch the process of digging the holes in the wood for the reception of the mother-of-pearl, the levelling down of the surface after the foreign material has been inserted, the beating in of the silver wire which surrounds the pearl, and finally the polishing of the whole. The work when completed, and looked at from a little distance, is most effective: you would almost want to eat a piece of it: it might pass for that sort of sweetmeat that is made in the form of a sheet of black ice and stuck all over with split almonds, the joy of little boys: but it has to be made so rapidly, because cheaply, that it cannot bear minute inspection.

You pass from this workshop by a side door into the silversmiths' shed. This is a square building, crossed by many alleys, by the sides of which, elevated a foot or two, sit the several jewellers, each with a ponderous safe at his right hand, and a display of the more common goods on a table before him. There is a lack of variety: at each table you see the same bangles, brooches, pins. It is interesting, however, to watch the process of manufacturing these goods: every jeweller here is a practical workman. And should you wish to buy, they sell by weight: the article is placed in the scale, and the beam is held up, and a process of calculation, real or feigned, is gone through, and the price announced. What with the numerous tiny blast-furnaces at work, the whole place has the air of a forge.

Passing towards the door, in the south-west corner, you

observe a woman trying to sell an article of jewellery. Either the price she puts upon it is too high, or they fail to fancy it; for she has offered it to several jewellers in vain. You leave her still persevering; and, just before coming out of the place, you mount a narrow stair, as steep as a ladder. This leads to the roof.

These grass roofs are pleasant to the foot: it is quite another world up here. Only, one must move somewhat cautiously. For one thing, there is the danger of dropping over the edge, or, more likely, walking down some of those numerous circular holes that serve to give light to the jewellers. And, to cover anything of an area, one wants to cross an occasional chasm—not a lane, but a ditch-looking depression among the roofs, probably necessitated by the internal arrangements. To facilitate this crossing, they have provided a plank here and there. They have also left a short ladder, which proves useful in passing from a higher roof to a lower, or contrariwise.

The immediate object of this excursion aloft is to look at a certain inscription in Greek, over the south gate or door of the mosque. It is a quotation of the words in Daniel which speak of God's kingdom being an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion enduring for ever and ever. This possesses but little interest for you, as it is a small matter that an inscription to that or any other effect should be allowed to remain on a mosque: the charm of this building centres in the undoubted fact that it stands on the site of the House of Rimmon, where Naaman bowed himself, just as those people below do to-day.

You pluck a little flower from the mosque wall: it has but slender hold, and apparently no earth, and will hardly know it has been captured and dispatched to a foreign land.

While on the roofs, you may as well have a look at the remains of the porch that once adorned the west door of the mosque in the pre-Muslim days. It is very evident that

there has been a superb canopy or colonnade here : though no longer absolutely required, these large stones are allowed to remain, a portion of the street-roof, and yet plainly not of it.

And now your inspection of the Great Mosque is at an end. As for Yokki-yōick, he has been gone a long time—tired of it, lacking tenacity of purpose.

The network of lanes about this corner of the mosque is most interesting. One or two of them are devoted exclusively to the sale of shoes—some selling the prevailing red shoe, others dealing in the less common yellow one. Here, you are close by the famous house you visited, and the khan bazaar, and the silk bazaar. The latter is a long narrow and usually crowded covered way extending from the top of the steps that lead down to the west door of the mosque. Close by in this bazaar is a room into which you can look through a large grated window. This contains the tomb of Nureddīn, a famous sultan who died in the eleven hundreds. The tomb, which is about six feet long and four high, in shape resembling the interior of a small tunnel, is covered with cloth, and has apparently had many pieces of cloth more or less ragged laid over it. This custom of hanging bits of rag on graves, or on the gratings outside, is older than Islam: the classical student will recall the passage in Thucydides, where the Platæans refer to the fact that they honoured the Lacedæmonians' forefathers slain by the Persians and buried at Platæa, by an annual public offering of garments.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DAMASCUS (concluded).

ONE day you went in search of Hobah, the place where Abraham overtook the four kings who carried Lot captive. It lay, according to Genesis, on the left of Damascus. If this be it, it is now called Jobar; and tradition marks it as the spot where Elijah anointed Elisha to be his successor, and Hazael to be king of Syria. They say, further, that Elijah hid himself here.

After minute inquiry as to the route, you set out all alone. It was a lovely Sunday morning, and to stand on such a spot would be an act of worship.

Crossing the Horse Market, and following the main thoroughfare which, beyond it, penetrates the north suburb eastward, you pass the consul's house, and hold right on, crossing the Aleppo road, and leaving the outskirts of the town just by the mills, near to the women's gathering-place. This morning a good many people have strolled into the outskirts: you see whole rows of white sheets dotted by the edge of little streams among the fields. These are Christian women. The Jews' Sabbath every one knows: the Muslims' is Friday. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, therefore, some shops or stalls in the city are shut up.

Fairly out into the country, you find all peaceful: it might be a rural Sunday morning in the West: as you felt on the Bethlehem road, so here: you almost expect to hear the bells. A boy driving some cows is the only

person you meet. Soon the forest closes around. You persevere, trying to reconcile the appearances of the road with the description given you. At length the road splits once more. You take the turning to the right, and cross a bridge—certainly contrary to instructions. Returning and taking the other road, you are delighted to begin by and by to perceive buildings among the trees.

This is a rustic village in the strictest sense. The houses are built of clay, their backs to the street, and when looked at through the door are farmyards of a sort, where the people and the beasts and the straw and everything else are packed together, the main object being to be shut in. Consequently to wander up the street, if street it can be called, is like pacing a forbidden back-lane. You see no one. At length the end is reached, where a stream flows past. This you cannot cross, nor would there be any use in crossing it, for the forest skirts its other bank. Retracing your steps, you take a turning to the left or east. Here one or two people are to be seen. You inquire of some men standing at the door of a mill as to whether this is Jobar, and if so where the synagogue is. They direct you, and after another turn to the right you knock at a gate in a lofty wall. It is opened by an old woman. In the court another female appears leading a child. They conduct you to the little old synagogue, where in the middle of the floor is a slab surrounded by a wooden railing, and bearing an inscription to the effect that on this spot Elijah anointed Elisha and Hazael. In a corner of the building they bid you descend to a cave, the place where Elijah hid. The old woman graciously acknowledges the donation with which you reward her kindness, but before letting you go suggests that something might be given to the child. It is amusing to see how quickly and openly those people clutch from the child any gift they have begged on its behalf. The child, if old enough to comprehend, must have its own thoughts.

Jobar is about two miles from Damascus, to the north-east. You choose a different road for the return journey—one that will bring you into the Aleppo road direct. It lies through a dense part of the forest, and you are fain to inquire of a peasant you meet whether you are right for Esh Shām. These people, though not unacquainted with the name Dimishk, usually call Damascus Esh Shām; and Shamin means a Syrian. The man civilly beckons in the direction you are going, and says, in his own way, "Yes; Esh Shām." And so you plod quietly home.

Every one who visits Damascus, goes or rides or is driven to a point on the Anti-Lebanon range from which there is a surpassing view of the plain and the forest and the city in the forest.

Damascus lies near the north edge of a vast plain. This plain is bounded on the north by the Anti-Lebanon range, on the south by the Mountains of Haurān—the district east of upper Jordan—on the west by Hermon, and on the east by the Syrian Desert. Its shape is oval, the length from east to west being about sixty miles, and the breadth about half. In the plain lies a forest of fruit and other trees. This forest, which teems with villages, is about ten miles in diameter. They call it Eden; and Ezekiel seems to favour the notion. Damascus lies within two miles of its north edge.

To reach the point on the Anti-Lebanon range from whence the coveted view is to be had, one would, on leaving the hotel, proceed up by the side of the river to opposite the first bridge. Here the town ends and gardens begin, and a road strikes north at right angles to the river. Houses line its east side. At the top of this street, on the left, stands a vast military hospital. Many lads are congregated about the upper windows, beguiling the time by watching the stream of traffic that pours incessantly along the road which here enters the forest. Up this road, among trees and gardens, and past an

occasional house, one soon arrives at Salahiyeh, the large town that skirts the slopes of Anti-Lebanon. Crossing a stream of considerable magnitude—a branch of the Bărădă, drawn off the parent stream far up, and brought down the side of the gorge in a channel hewn out of the rocks, till it now, like the one on the other side whose acquaintance you made that evening you arrived at Damascus, flows at a much higher level than the one it parted company with—you enter the town, near the west end. To-day your route lies by the west of the town. You scarcely enter it at all, only passing along an out-lying street, which is very untidy, and into which several shorter ditch-like streets that stretch off it up the mountain foot pour down their quota of unsavouriness. On your left are extensive gardens, and the outskirts of the forest.

Immediately beyond and behind the town the barren face of the hills begins. The contrast is most striking: here on your left is abundance of vegetation, while your path and all on the right are red and stony and as dry and barren as a mound of ashes; and the cactus edge enclosing the gardens defines the boundary. The path is faintly discernible, being beaten with the horses' feet; but your route is simply a scramble over waves of stone-dust heaps, and along the base of steep and lofty banks of the same formation, till you reach the summit of a hill—the one you saw, with the tower on it, when drawing near to Damascus the day you arrived.

This hill forms the east end of the gorge through which the Bărădă flows out into the open. The tower on its summit, a small ruin, is said to stand on the spot, or to be the identical tower whence Mohammed looked upon Damascus. The prophet turned away, refusing to enter the lovely city, declaring that there could be but one paradise, and his was above.

But to your mind, this tower has associations more remote than the days of the prophet, and with a greater

than he. How singular that none of all the travellers who have come hither has called to mind the passage, in Solomon's Song, which speaks of "the tower of Lebanon that looketh toward Damascus!" The description is inimitable: no other spot on the whole range could possibly be suggested as at all a conceivable seat of a tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus. This may or may not be the original tower: it is sufficiently weatherbeaten, however, to entitle it to rank in the matter of age with the pyramids: a small circular building, moreover, it would offer but few vulnerable points to the attacks of the elements: and beyond all question, it stands were the original stood.

This tower looks towards Damascus in a south-easterly direction. The city is just far enough off to make a picture: it appears as embedded in the dense forest, and closely surrounded by it, the outlying cemeteries not being visible. Chief among the prominent features is the Great Mosque, with its lofty dome and three minarets. The countless other minarets come next, and finally the sea of human habitations that lies deep in the green plain: No wonder the prophet likened Damascus to paradise: no wonder tradition has named this forest the Garden of Eden.

Not satisfied with this slanting view, and holding it possible to improve upon it by getting on to the much loftier summit of the range immediately opposite to and overlooking the city, you started one day on that expedition. Crossing the vast red cemetery that skirts the back of Salahiyeh, you attacked the very face of the mountains. For a time, it was, though slippery enough, fairly practicable climbing. But as you ascended, and the hard flinty ground became steeper, it was all you could do to progress at all: it wanted careful watching to prevent your feet from flying from beneath you, and as careful balancing lest you should tumble and roll to the bottom.

At length you reached a point where the rocks rose sheer, and almost touched on either side of a gorge. Before climbing into this gorge you sat down to rest at the mouth of a cave. Certain large bones lying bleaching started the inquiry as to how any beast of burden could possibly have come up here to die. Resuming the climb, you scrambled into the gorge, well aware as soon as you had done it that you could never come down that way again. Into the gorge, you found it full of tumble-down stones—literally a petrified torrent. As you climbed up the face of this loose accumulation you felt it begin to move : standing still, you were lowered for a space, when the mass settled again. Your fears were now awakened : you dreaded failing to reach the top ; and as for descending, the thought was too horrible : even to look down was unsafe. It might even turn out, moreover, that before reaching the top, a wall of cliff might bar the way.

Great was your joy to stand on the summit. Breathless, you were nevertheless impatient to enjoy the dearly bought view. But hardly had you turned to look, when with the side of your eye you caught sight of some moving creature. Turning to face it, you beheld a full-grown hyæna. Aware of the danger of wounding it, you resolved to stand and await the issue. On it came, trotting peacefully, and, passing you by without so much as a look, disappeared in the sea of boulders, and was gone. The hyæna would rather attack the dead than the living : he loves to prowl under cover of night, and scrape up a newly made grave.

You wandered westward along the top of the range—journey never taken before by solitary European—gradually descending till you reached the neighbourhood of the tower. It was not at all a pleasant journey : who could tell but that in any of the holes, or behind any of the boulders you passed, many more wild beasts might be

lurking? It was with a feeling of relief that you entered Salahiyeh; for not even is it free of danger to go unattended to the tower: among the graves stood a madman who looked as if he meditated attacking you. He hesitated, however, and you got between him and the town.

Before coming down this way you had thought of descending from the tower into the river gorge, and returning to Damascus by the Beyrout road; and you went over in search of a way down; but the rock-cut channel, full of water, was a barrier. You had probably run risks enough for one day. Glad were you to get hold of the string by which the hotel door latch is lifted, and mounting the stone stair, leave the dangers of the outer world behind—though not its sounds.

It is marvellous with what care the beasts of burden avoid treading on the sleeping dogs. Possibly this care may be inspired partly by prudential considerations; but on the whole it is only fair to the dogs to say that they are not given to initiating assaults, nor even to retaliating on an aggressor: homeless, and cowed through systematic ill-treatment, the dog prepares not to retaliate but to escape. But man is less merciful than the beasts: a sudden prolonged yelling, of the most heart-rending description, tells the pitiful tale that the foot of the faithful has been at work.

At first, one wonders why the Oriental does not exterminate these dogs, Pets they are not: not one of these myriad curs belongs to anybody. Starved and mangy, their life appears to be a burden to themselves. But the secret of it is this, that the dogs are useful for eating all sorts of refuse. It is a touching sight to see a litter of pups—as one sometimes comes upon them among the graves. At that juvenile stage they look rather well. One cannot, however, help likening their lot to that of the children of waifs and strays, and thinking what an awful future awaits them. Unsightly with sores—the result of

foul food and nightly fighting—dying in the streets and often left there to lie till his comrades have eaten him up, the dog is a fit object of supreme compassion, the commiseration of Heaven itself. But he has his revenge, in a small way, on his neglectors: no sooner does night-fall approach than, lo, the air is filled with barking. These foul curs, the instinctive love of combat surviving as the sole feature left to them of genuine canine character, are ever on the alert for the fray. Whenever a hapless wanderer from another street presents itself, one after one, as fast as they can hurry, the denizens of the district make for it, attracted by the accents of the discoverer; and in a moment the fight is loud and furious. Such a chorus of barking was never elsewhere heard. By and by, from out the babel, pitched an octave higher than the rest, rings the recitative of the discomfited. As this fades in the distance, suggestive of a retreat on three legs, the chorus subsides, and the several performers return to their lairs. At intervals all the night long, whenever an intruder is discovered—driven through stress of hunger to venture beyond his accustomed haunts—those revels are repeated; and woe to the wayfarer in these parts whose dormitory faces the street.

It is interesting to note the varieties of costume among these people. As for the women's dresses, they can be distinctly classified: broadly, there are but the two types, the white winding-sheet and the black-and-yellow striped one—though some red-and-white, and a few purple-and-white, are also to be met with. Head-dress there is none: the sheet is worn over the head, pulled tight over the veil and down the sides of the face. A Muslim woman lets the corners of the sheet hang down below either hand: a Christian, on the contrary, turns the corners in, out of sight. Nevertheless, such is the uniformity in female attire here that all individuality is sacrificed, and except in the matter of height, one woman is practically the

exact counterpart of another, and a man is unable to recognize his own sister if she chances to be walking in front of him.

But as for the costumes of the male sex, each man seems, while recognizing certain general outlines, to select a fashion for himself. The labourer's attire—for there are types, although the type is varied indefinitely to satisfy individual taste—consists of a blue cotton knickerbocker suit, red waistband, and white wrapping round the red fez. There is much waste of cloth in the knickerbockers, the width in the upper regions being absurdly ample. For knickerbockers proper, too, these are too long, reaching almost to the ankle. At the ankle they are almost tight about the leg, but towards the knee they widen rapidly, at which point both legs are joined in a kind of sewn-up petticoat. This is but a trouser development of the original petticoat garment, which is sewn-up across the entire width from foot to foot, spaces being left for the passage of the feet.

The well-to-do tradesman arrays himself in a long overgarment of blue cloth, edged within with fur, sleeved but without collar. Under this garment—which is worn open—he displays a yellow silk frock with various-coloured waist-wrapping; and he wears round his fez a spotless white turban of liberal dimensions.

Of these two types there are numerous varieties. For instance, there goes a grimy old man in what you would describe as a decayed pink dressing-gown; another in yellow; a third in pink-and-white stripe. Everybody wears the red shoe, which can be put off and on in an instant, no lacing being required: the incessant shoe removal at the entrances to the mosques may have something to do with this fashion. Although, in the case of the women, a sole—with tip in which to insert the toe of the boot, and spring to catch the heel—serves for outer shoe; and the removal of this is held sufficient, when a

visit happens to be made to the mosque. In most cases the gay red of the men's shoes has got defaced, and in many altogether obliterated.

Socks are rare, except among the better class tradesmen; and even they rarely wear a collar. This untidy feature, combined with the slipshod condition of the feet, gives one the impression of being among people who are moving about their dressing rooms, rather than in the streets of a large city. And this impression is confirmed by the sight of a greybearded fellow strutting about in the crowd, clad only in a couple of towels, as much as to say, "See: I have just strolled out from the bath."

Those gay and various-coloured costumes would be picturesque could one see them from a distance, and forget their real condition; but the filth and the clouting—the majority of them are severely clouted, and with pieces as unlike the original as possible—mar the picture; and instead of seeing anything admirable in the scene, one can hardly think of it as other than a community of merry-andrews holding holiday unaware.

Music is absolutely foreign to the natives of these parts. The monotonous calling from the minarets which goes on every day at stated intervals, would seem to be adopted by the people as the only tune that has ever been or can be devised. This consists of a cry and a shake, a cry and a shake, and so on. The nearest approach to music you hear in these parts comes from some itinerant stranger minstrel. The other day you were startled by hearing what suggested the first line of a well-known Scottish air. The singer—who never got beyond the first line—turned out to be a tall old blind negro, scantily clad in a faded blue tattered frock, walking erect, as blind people do, and carrying a stick that reached to his chin. To-day your ear is again greeted with the same air, commenced without warning just at your side. You look round in the crowd; but "Come under my" is all the length the song

goes : the singer has run against an iron four-poster, and he pauses to feel what the nature of the strange obstacle may be.

Like the Christian, the Muslim comes short of his religious profession. As for minding observances, taking note of times and seasons, and in general paying due regard to all the paraphernalia of religion, he leaves nothing to be desired. Even the women display a faith and a zeal worthy of any cause. In what Christian country, it might be asked, could anything be found to match the loving care with which that poor mother seeks to secure for her child a share of the blessing she asks for herself? It is an old tomb by the wayside, and on the wall a text from the Koran. She lifts her thoughts heavenward and formulates a prayer, but it is not all for self : before again taking the road, she passes a hand over the gilded scroll, and rubs the virtue thereof upon the child's face.

It is also true that the imbeciles and idiots, who wander at large, scantily clad, and quite unfit sights for civilized eyes, are not molested very much, though occasionally the mischief of the Muslim tempts him to tease some of the poor wretches into a fury.

But see him with his beast : with heavy club-like stick he thumps his donkey's head, or kicks the helpless beast in the body ; or if he leads a flock of lambs he kicks them as though, destined for the slaughter, it mattered little what preliminary tortures they endured. Pet lambs, it is true, are not unknown in the streets of Damascus : these, dotted with red dye, and wearing a ribbon round the neck, and taught like their brethren of the country to recognize the sound b-r-r-r, follow their owner ; but they fall a prey too often to the native cruelty of the youthful Muslim : unlike the dogs, they do not lie about asleep in the daytime, and therefore the temptation to drop big stones upon them is not put in the way of the young hopeful,

but you have seen the stone-dropping tried upon their toes, not without effect.

Ask that man the price of his goods, and he will probably tell you, not what he deems their worth, nor what he expects to get for them, but what he believes will be a favourable point from which to commence bargaining. Some would call this practising deception ; and there are those who would deny to the Oriental the ability to be straightforward, accounting dissimulation a fundamental element of his nature. To take that view would probably be to wrong him. At the same time, his method of bargaining is open to criticism, were it on no other ground than that of utility ; for it is obviously absurd that, as the result of prolonged negotiations, conducted with more or less energy, both parties attitudinizing, gesticulating, and vociferating, suggestive of a contest in crowing carried on between a couple of bantam fowls, the one giving voice immediately the other has barely ceased, and their beaks being brought into all but contact, the goods change hands at a fourth of the price originally demanded. But this is nothing new ; for in Proverbs we read, "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer ; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

The strangers in the streets are a study. Damascus is the market-town of a wide district : it supplies the numberless villages of the surrounding plain. There is consequently a constant influx, a going to and fro, of peasants of all sorts and conditions. Here, seated on the footpath, and making a meal of broad thin scones of Indian corn—home baked—with leeks, are some half-dozen Bedouins. They have come to town to sell, and probably to buy. Swarthy, sunburnt, and prematurely wrinkled, the face looking out from beneath an extemporized cap of thin black shawl, and the heavy figure hidden under the all-embracing sack-like upper garment, these nomads give the impression of having settled down into a stolid sulk, ill-natured fellows—if one may judge by appearances.

Here, too, is the Circassian, tall and slim, but an unmistakable Russian peasant—dread of all who journey in lonely parts. With tight-waisted buttoned-up long-skirted white felt frock-coat, a row of cartridges ornamenting either breast, black fur turban, boots reaching to the knee, and pistol holster suspended from a belt, he struts along as if he were governor of the city.

And many are the squat peasant women from the mountains, tattooed—like the couple you saw driving their donkeys out the Aleppo road—and arrayed after a tawdry fashion in a blue cotton Bloomer costume, the nose-jewel being a constant feature of the picture.

Like Jerusalem, Damascus does but little in the way of lighting up : gas is unknown here, and likely to remain so ; and a rare lamp is all the provision made for illuminating the streets at night. Indeed, except in moonlight, and hardly then, the people are not expected to venture forth after dark. You did see a turn-out of a kind, that evening the band played ; but it was a mere handful, and apparently drawn from the immediate neighbourhood. It seems natural to the Oriental to go early to bed, and early to rise.

Unlike Jerusalem, there are plenty of wells here : dig anywhere, and you strike water. But though pure to the eye, it is hardly to be trusted · not only is there the risk of impurities percolating, but the soil itself is impure, being but the rubbish of ancient foundations and destructions to a considerable depth. The water of the Bārādā, the Abana of old, if run into a proper reservoir, and filtered, would be an immense boon to Damascus. But the steady flow is allowed to pass on, little utilized, and to lose itself in the desert lake some seventeen miles to the east. What with the river and the Merj or drill-meadow, Damascus possesses advantages which might be the pride of any city. No wonder Naaman, calling these to mind, and contrasting them with the mud-banks

of the tawny river near Gilgal, demanded indignantly to know whether the Abana and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, were not better than all the waters of Jordan.

And now your tent companions are long gone. You rode with them through the streets, and round the walls, and halted to look with curious eye on the spot at the south-east corner—still the Jewish quarter—from which Saul of Tarsus was let down in a basket. And your muleteers, shaven and washed, and dressed in better garments, strolling through the bazaars, would smile and salaam when they met you. And you were loth to part with Zaid, your faithful horse, looking longingly after him till he disappeared in the Bārādā gorge, under the Tower of Lebanon. All are gone.

And now you have made friends with a pasha, a mighty man, who, they tell you, would have a say in such a matter as declaring war. This man has quite a Turkish cast of face, sallow complexion, black moustache, and wears a black suit of European clothes. He sticks to the red fez, however, and possibly sleeps in it, for you have never seen him without it, albeit you sit next to him at dinner every evening. He wears it indoors and out of doors.

Dinner over, he proceeds to the salon, seating himself on one of the luxurious divans by the wall. An attendant boy, in blue petticoat and black jacket, serves his coffee, and brings the narghile lighted and ready. Taking a few puffs, and dropping the silver tube or mouth-piece on the marble floor, the pasha sips his coffee and returns the cup to the boy, who awaits holding the saucer. Picking up the narghile tube, but not troubling to wipe it, he resumes his smoke, and relapses into real enjoyment. The boy keeps a look-out, ready to remove the narghile when it wants recharging. The tobacco used for this kind of pipe is Persian. It is unsuitable for ordinary smoking, burning charcoal being required to keep it going.

To-day the pasha has received a lady visitor. Tall and slight, she is a vision to behold, when the black silk shawl or sheet has been thrown back off head and shoulders. She carries a child; and with her comes a man, not apparently her equal, but neither apparently a servant, for he exchanges salutations with the pasha, and occupies a seat close by. The lady sits on the divan beside the great man; and the child, held by its mother's hand, plays on the floor. The trio of grown-up people, the formality of the reception over, look silently at their feet. A pause of a minute or two, which to you looking on from the far end of the room seems an age because of the awkwardness involved, does not appear to any of the party to be other than the right and customary thing—though the lady looks as if she would rather have a little lively conversation. You hail the entrance of the boy: he comes bringing coffee. Now, you predict, the silence will be broken. At all events there will be something to do. But the diversion of the coffee soon ends, followed by another relapse into the wax-work. The child is not noticed. Fortunately or otherwise it is too young to speak. The attendant boy returns, this time bringing his master's narghile, the arrival of which proves a real relief: it gives occasion for an exchange of words between the pasha and the lady, for he offers her the tube. She graciously declines. Silence again: eyes directed to feet. Actually a remark from the great man, responded to in a word by the lady; a relapse once more. The lady's companion rises to go. The lady makes as if she too would go. She is persuaded, with much dumb show of beckoning and deprecating, to resume her seat. Now there will be a more lively state of things, the unnecessary third having gone. No. The pasha, after a time, offers a brief remark, to which the lady responds as briefly, and both continue to inspect the floor at their feet. At length, after some quiet fidgeting, the lady rises to go; and this

time she is permitted. Drawing up the black silk over shoulders and head, and lifting the child in her arms, she salaams to her host, and is conducted by him to the door. Surely, you reflect, if all Orientals have as little to say to each other as the pasha and his visitors, they must make for themselves the slowest of times.

How awkward to have to require the services of a letter-writer ! In these streets one of the most curious, if not most common, sights is the public scribe, seated at his desk on the footpath, surrounded by a bevy of women, one of whom is having an epistle dispatched to a relation, or it may be to her absent husband. It would be interesting to overhear how they set about composing the message. Evidently the contents are of slight import ; for never have you chanced to see a case in which the parties present numbered only the scribe and his client. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that these Orientals are greatly given to prying into each other's affairs : they think nothing of pausing to look into your hand, or to inspect your note-book over your shoulder ; and probably this habit has almost demolished the idea of a secret altogether. At any rate, the good woman for whom the letter is being written has always an audience if not a conclave of advisers. And at the best she must needs place herself at the mercy of the scribe. One would fain indulge the comforting hope that these simple people have no secrets. The scribe is a survival from of old : Ezekiel speaks of a man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side.

The Damascenes love to be looked at. Here is an old man, dressed in the long blue collarless fur-edged garment, but by way of variety with a brown stove-pipe on the back of his head, enveloped in blue cloth half-way up. Not content with thus making a spectacle of himself, he has mounted a horse, and rides backwards and forwards along the road that skirts the south bank of the river

opposite the hotel, and that at full gallop, holding up his right hand as he flies along—a habit in these parts.

The jesting of these people, too, is done in a very open way: in presence of a whole multitude a rough fellow will facetiously affect to assault his neighbour.

Nor do they take pains to hide deformity. Here comes a man with a leg like an elephant's—bare and black. Here is another on all fours. Again, a beggar lying across a donkey's back. And almost all the people are in the habit of talking to themselves, and playing with strings of beads.

To the Bible student, probably the most interesting object to be seen in the streets of Damascus is a mule laden with refuse—street sweepings. You have seen the same sight in Jerusalem, only on a smaller scale—a donkey instead of a mule. Here, in place of the shallow open sack that is laid across the beast's back to receive the refuse, a deep and wide receptacle made of matting is substituted. This resembles a common flat fish-basket. That is to say, if laid on the ground it would assume the form of a flat square; but opened up and placed on the mule's back it becomes a couple of conical receptacles, one on either side, the points towards and not far from the ground. These receptacles are of considerable capacity. To prevent their pressing unduly against the beast's sides, a slender pole is passed under the belly, and holds the two points apart: it sticks there of its own accord. This spectacle recalls Naaman's request of the two mules' burdens of earth.

It is pleasant to stroll by the river, especially about the Merj. Even when drill is going on, it is soothing to let the eye wander over the great green flat; but especially is it so towards evening, when all is quiet. On the north side of the river, and quite alongside it, is the Beyrout road, lined with trees. Beyond the road are the dense gardens that reach to the foot of the barren mountains

near by Salahiyeh. Skirting the south side of the Merj are the heights you traversed on the afternoon of your arrival. Since then you have explored the forest that extends from these banks to the great south suburb. Between you and the sky, as you stand to-night with your back to the river and look south over the Merj to the enclosing ridge or tableland-face, is a long string of camels, each laden with a couple of felled trees. They traverse this road nightly: always about the same time you see them pacing steadily into the great square. Yonder goes the leader. He turns to the left at the south-east corner of the Merj. Down northward from the table-land, leaving the ubiquitous cemetery behind, he will pass between the meadow and the many-domed pilgrim house; and at the river he will take the road that lies on the south bank, and soon be entering the square. You also turn to go: the Muslim twelve o'clock is at hand: the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

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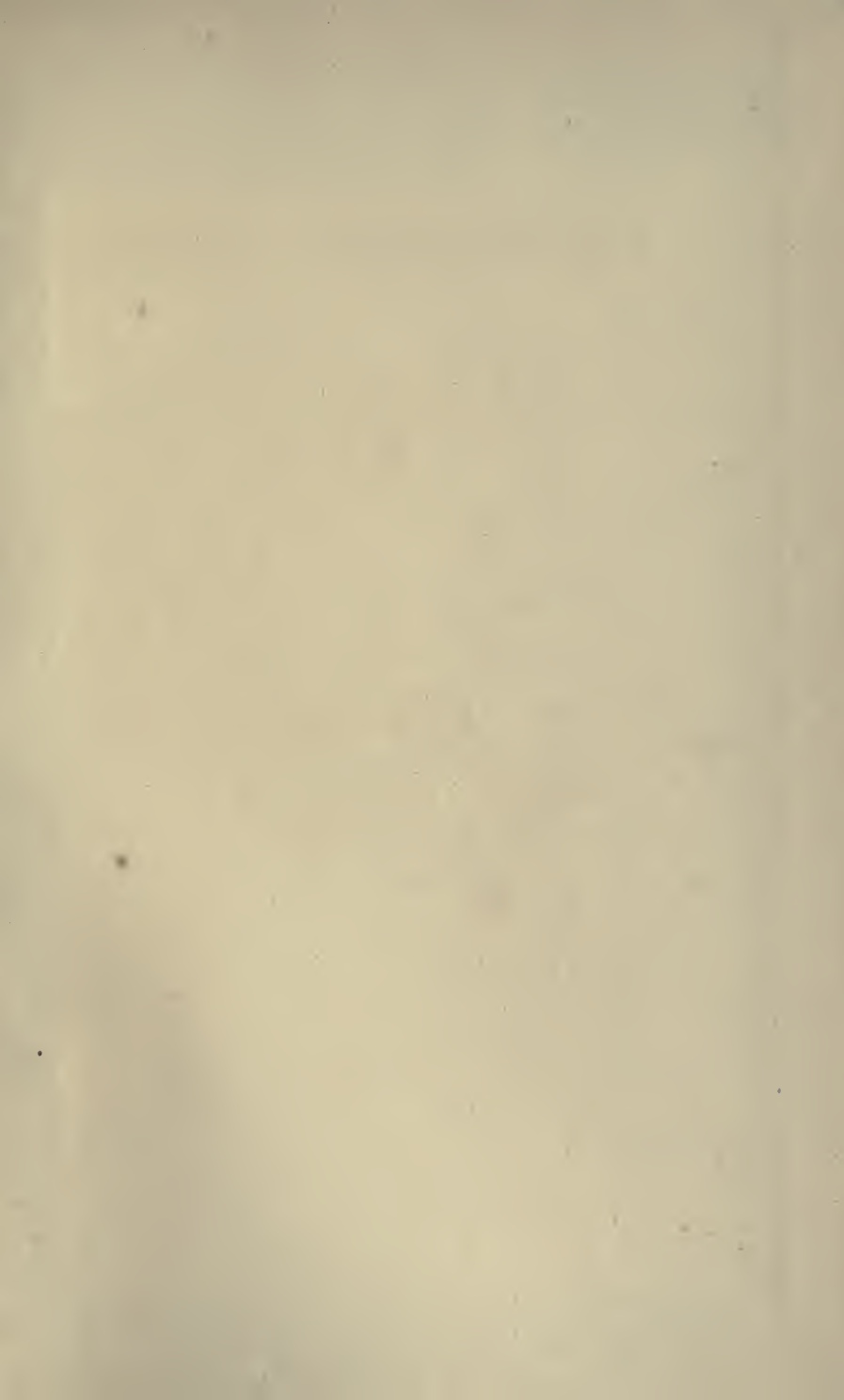
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